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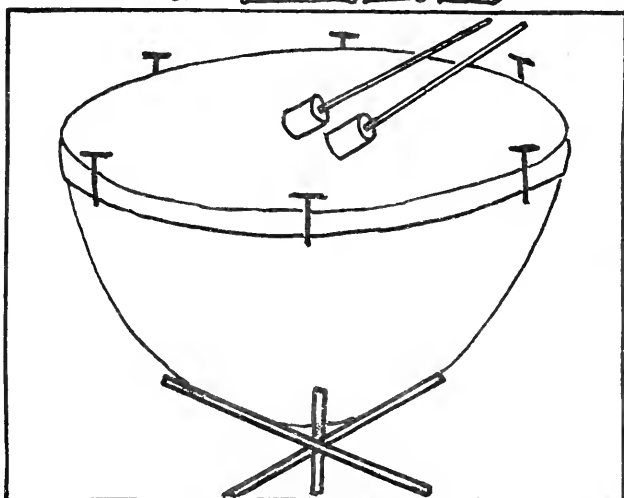
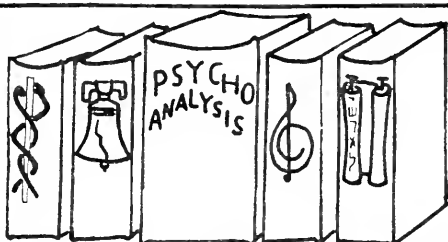
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THE THREE CLERKS.

A Novel. *

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "BARCHESTER TOWERS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE THREE CLERKS.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. WOODWARD'S REQUEST.

WE will now go back for a while to Hampton. The author, for one, does so with pleasure. Though those who dwell there be not angels, yet it is better to live with the Woodwards and Harry Norman, with Uncle Bat, or even with the unfortunate Charley, than with such as Alaric and Undy Scott. The man who is ever looking after money is fitting company only for the devils, of whom, indeed, he is already one.

But Charley cannot any longer be called one of the cottage circle. It was now the end of October, and since the day of his arrest he had not yet been there. He had not been asked; nor would he go uninvited, as after what had passed at Hampton Court Bridge he surely might have done.

And consequently they were all unhappy. No one was more so than Charley. When the prospect of the happy evening with Norah had been so violently interrupted by his arrest, he had, among his other messages, sent word to the Cat

and Whistle, excusing his absence by a statement of the true cause. From that day to this of which we are now speaking he had seen neither Mrs. Davis nor her fair *protégée*. Such advance he made in his path of improvement, if no further. In this, probably, he will receive but little credit; for in staying away he followed the dictates of his inclination. But it was something done, that his inclination should have changed.

Norman, as we have said, paid Mr. Outerman's debt, and thus largely increased that due to himself. When Charley, overwhelmed with the weight of obligation, again declared his intention of leaving Mrs. Richards' house so that he might no longer be a burden to his friend, Norman, with all the love, and all the authority of a brother, forbade him to do so, and forbade Mrs. Richards to permit his things to leave the house. So Charley remained on, at some times repentant and steady, working hard for the "Daily Delight," and at other times breaking out in sad disorder, spending his nights with Scatterall at the dancing saloon of Seville, and returning with daylight to his lodgings, not always in a state of perfect sobriety.

Nor were they better contented at the Cottage. Mrs. Woodward was harassed by different feelings and different fears, which together made her very unhappy. Her Katie was still ill; not ill indeed so that she was forced to keep her bed, and receive daily visits from pernicious doctors,

but, nevertheless, so ill as to make a mother very anxious.

She had never been quite strong, quite herself, from the night of Mrs. Val's dance. The doctor who had attended her declared that her ducking in the river had given her cold, and this, not having been duly checked, still hung about her. Then she had been taken to a physician in London, who poked her on the back and tapped her on the breast, listened to her lungs through a wooden pipe—such was the account which Katie gave herself when she returned home—and prescribed rum and milk and cod's liver oil, declaring, with an authoritative nod, that there was no organic disease,—as yet.

“And what shall we do with her, doctor?” asked Mrs. Woodward.

“Go on with the rum and milk and cod's liver oil, you can't do better.”

“And the cough, doctor?”

“Why, if that doesn't go before the cold weather begins, you may as well take her to Torquay for the winter.”

Oh! consumption, thou scourge of England's beauty! how many mothers, gasping with ill-suppressed fears, have listened to such words as these—have listened and then hoped; listened again and hoped again, with fainter hopes; have listened again, and hoped no more!

But there was much on Mrs. Woodward's mind which she could not bring herself to tell to

any doctor, but which still left in her breast an impression that she was perhaps keeping back the true cause of Katie's illness. Charley had not been at Hampton since his arrest, and it was manifest to all that Katie was therefore wretched.

"But why do you not ask him, mama?" she had urged when her mother suggested that he stayed away because he did not like to show himself after what had occurred. "What will he think of us? he that saved my life, mama! Oh, mama! you promised to forgive him. Do ask him. You know he will come if you ask him."

Mrs. Woodward could not explain to her, could not explain to any one why she did not invite him. Norman guessed it all, and Mrs. Woodward saw that he had done so; but still she could not talk to him of Katie's feelings, could not tell him that she feared her child was heart-laden with so sad a love. So Mrs. Woodward had no confidant in her sorrow, no counsel which she could seek to aid her own wavering judgment. It was prudent, she thought, that Katie and Charley should be kept apart—prudent! was it not even imperative on her to save her child from such a fate? But then, when she saw the rosy cheek grow pale by degrees, as she watched the plump little arms grow gradually thin and wan, as those high spirits fell and that voice which had ever been so frequent in the house and so clear, when the sound of it became low and rare, then her heart would misgive her, and she would all

but resolve to take the only step which she knew would bring a bright gleam on her child's face, and give a happy tone to her darling's voice.

During the earlier portion of these days Katie had with eager constancy reiterated her request that Charley should be asked to Hampton; but of a sudden her prayers ceased. She spoke no more of Charley, asked no longer after his coming, ceased even to inquire frequently of his welfare. But yet, when his name was mentioned, she would open wide her bright eyes, would listen with all her ears, and show only too plainly to one who watched her as a mother only can watch, what were the thoughts which filled her heart.

"Linda," she had said one night, as they sat in their room, preparing themselves for bed, "Linda, why does not mama invite Charley to come down to Hampton?"

"Oh! I don't know," said Linda; who, however, if she did not know, was not far wrong in the guess she made. "I suppose she thinks he'd be ashamed to show himself after having been in prison."

"Ashamed! Why should he be ashamed after so long? Didn't you hear Harry say that the same thing often happens to young men? Is he never to come here again? Dear Linda, I know you know; do tell me."

"Well, I'm sure I do not know, if that's not the reason."

"Oh! Linda, dear Linda, yes you do," said Katie, throwing herself on her knees, resting her arms on her sister's lap and looking up wistfully into her sister's face. Her long hair was streaming down her back; her white, naked feet peeped out from beneath her bedroom dress, and large tears glistened in her eyes. Who could have resisted the prayers of such a suppliant? Certainly not Linda, the soft-hearted Linda.

"Do tell me," continued Katie, "do tell me—I am sure you know; and, Linda, if it is wrong to ask mama about it, I'll never, never ask her again. I know mama is unhappy about it. If my asking is wrong, I'll not make her unhappy any more, in that way."

Linda, for a while, did not know what to answer. Her hesitating manner immediately revealed to Katie that there was a secret, and that her sister could tell it if she would.

"Oh! Linda, do tell me, do tell me, dear Linda; you ought to tell me for mama's sake."

At last, with much hesitation, Linda told her the whole tale. "Perhaps mama thinks that you are too fond of Charley."

An instant light flushed across Katie's heart—across her heart, and brain, and senses. Not another word was necessary to explain to her the whole mystery, to tell the whole tale, to reveal to her the secret of her own love, of her mother's fears, and of his assumed unwillingness. She got up slowly from her knees, kissed her

sister's cheek and neck, smiled at her so sweetly, so sadly, and then sitting on her old seat, began playing with her long hair, and gazing at vacancy.

"It is only what I guess, you know, Katie—you would make me tell you, but I am sure there is nothing in it."

"Dear Linda," said she, "you are so good; I am so much obliged to you."

After that Katie spoke no further of Charley. But it was evident to them all, that though she said nothing, she had not ceased to think of him. Nor did her cheek become again rosy, nor her arms round, nor her voice happy. She got weaker than ever, and poor Mrs. Woodward was overcome with sorrow.

Nor was this the only cause of grief at Surbiton Cottage. During the last few weeks a bitter estrangement had taken place between the Woodwards and the Tudors, Alaric Tudor that is and Gertrude. Two years had now passed since Norman had chosen to quarrel with Alaric, and during all that period the two had never spoken amicably together, though they had met on business very frequently; on all such occasions Alaric had been imperturbed and indifferent, whereas Norman had been gloomy, and had carried a hostile brow and angry eye. At their period of life, two years generally does much to quiet feelings of ill-will and pacify animosity; but Norman's feelings had by no means been

quieted, nor his animosity pacified. He had loved Alaric with a close and manly love; now he hated him with a close and, I fear I may say, a manly hatred. Alaric had, as he thought, answered his love by treachery; and there was that in Norman's heart which would not allow him to forgive one who had been a traitor to him. He had that kind of selfishness so common to us, but of which we are so unconscious, which will not allow us to pardon a sin against our own *amour propre*. Alaric might have been forgiven, though he had taken his friend's money, distanced him in his office, though he had committed against him all offences which one friend can commit against another, all but this. Norman had been proud of his love, and yet ashamed of it. Proud of loving such a girl as Gertrude, and ashamed of being known to be in love at all. He had confided his love to Alaric, and Alaric had robbed him of his love, and wounded both his pride and his shame.

Among Alaric's heavy offences this was by no means, we think, the heaviest. There may, indeed, be those who think he committed no offence at all, seeing that Gertrude would never have married Norman. But this was an excuse which, in Norman's view, had no bearing on the offence. He had entrusted the secret of his love to his friend, and from that moment it became that friend's duty to assist his wishes, abet his plans, and further his love by every means in his

power. Such was Norman's theory of friendship ; a theory which he never expressed indeed, for he was not given to much expression of his feelings, but on which he would have himself acted. Alaric, when summoned to assist his friend to secure a rich treasure, had filched it himself.

Norman lacked the charity which should have been capable of forgiving even this. He could not forgive it at the time, nor was he a whit the more able to do so when two years had gone by. The man had become distasteful and abhorrent to him. He now looked at all Alaric's doings through a different glass than that which he had used when Alaric had been dear to him. He saw, or thought that he saw, that his successful rival was false, ambitious, treacherous, and dishonest ; he made no excuses for him, gave him no credit for his industry, accorded no admiration to his talent. He never spoke ill of Alaric Tudor to others, but he fed his own heart with speaking and thinking ill of him to himself.

Of Gertrude he thought very differently. He had taught himself to disconnect her from the treachery of her husband—or rather her memory ; for, from the day on which he had learnt that she was engaged to Alaric, he had never seen her. He still loved the remembrance of her. In his solitary walks with Mrs. Woodward he would still speak of her as he might of one in some distant clime, for whose welfare he was deeply interested. He had seen and caressed

her baby at Hampton. She was still dear to him. Had Alaric been called to his long account, it would have been his dearest wish to have become at some future time the husband of his widow.

To all these feelings on Norman's part Alaric was very indifferent; but their existence operated as a drawback on his wife's comfort, and, to a certain degree, on his own. Mrs. Woodward would not banish Norman from the cottage, even for her daughter's sake, and it came by degrees to be understood that the Tudors, man and wife, should not go there unless they were aware that Norman was absent. Norman, on the other hand, did absent himself when it was understood that Alaric and Gertrude were coming; and thus the Woodwards kept up their intercourse with both.

But this was a bore. Alaric thought it most probable that Norman would marry one of the younger sisters, and he knew that family quarrels are uncomfortable and injudicious. When therefore he became a Civil Service Commissioner, and was thus removed from business intercourse with Norman, he conceived that it would be wise to arrange a reconciliation. He discussed the matter with Gertrude, and she, fully agreeing with him, undertook the task of making the proposal through her mother. This she did with all the kindness and delicacy of a woman. She desired her mother to tell Harry how much she

had valued his friendship, how greatly she regretted the loss of it, how anxious her husband was to renew, if possible, their former terms of affection. Mrs. Woodward, by no means sanguine, undertook the commission. She undertook it, and utterly failed; and when Gertrude, in her disappointment, spoke bitterly of Norman's bitterness, both mother and sister, both Mrs. Woodward and Linda, took Norman's part.

"I wish it could be otherwise," said Mrs. Woodward, "I wish it for all our sakes; but he is a man not easily to be turned, and I cannot blame him. He has suffered very much."

Gertrude became very red. Her mother's words contained a reproach against herself, tacit and unintended indeed, but not the less keenly felt.

"I am not aware that Mr. Norman has any cause of just complaint," she said, "against any one, unless it be himself. For the sake of charity and old associations we have wished that all ideas of injury should be forgiven and forgotten. If he chooses still to indulge his rancour, he must do so. I had taken him to be a better Christian."

More words had sprung from these. Mrs. Woodward, who, in truth, loved Norman the better for the continuance of his sorrow, would not give up his part; and so the mother and child parted, and the two sisters parted, not quarrelling indeed, not absolutely with angry

words, but in a tone of mind towards each other widely differing from that of former years. Mrs. Woodward had lost none of the love of the parent; but Gertrude had forgotten somewhat of the reverence of the child.

All this had added much to the grief created by Katie's illness.

And then of a sudden Katie became silent, as well as sad and ill—silent and sad, but so soft, so loving in her manner. Her gentle little caresses, the tender love ever lying in her eye, the constant pressure of her thin small hand, would all but break her mother's heart. Katie would sit beside her on the sofa in the drawing-room for hours; a book, taken up as an excuse, would be in her lap, and she would sit there gazing listlessly into the vacant daylight till the evening would come; and then, when the room was shaded and sombre, when the light of the fire merely served to make the objects indistinct, she would lean gently and by degrees upon her mother's bosom, would coax her mother's arm round her neck, and would thus creep as it were into her mother's heart of hearts. And then slow tears would trickle down her cheeks, very slow, one by one, till they would fall as tell-tales on her mother's hand.

"Katie, my darling Katie," the mother would say.

"I'm only tired, mama," would be her answer. "Don't move, mama; pray don't move. I am so comfortable."

And then at night she would put herself to rest close circled in Linda's arms. She would twist up her little feet, and lie so quiet there, that Linda would remain motionless that she might not disturb her Katie's sleep; but soon warm tears would be running on her bosom, and she would know that Katie was still thinking of her love.

Linda, among all her virtues, had not that of reticence, and her mother had soon learnt from her what had been said that night in their bedroom about Charley. But this violation of confidence, if it was a violation, was hardly necessary to make Mrs. Woodward aware of what was passing in her daughter's bosom. - When Katie ceased to ask that Charley might be sent for, when she ceased to plead for his pardon and to praise his virtues, Mrs. Woodward knew well the cause of her silence. It was not that others suspected her love, but that she had learned to suspect it herself. It was not that she was ashamed of loving Charley, but that she felt at once that such love would distress her mother's heart.

As she sat there that night fingering her silken hair, she had asked herself whether in truth this man was master of her heart; she had probed her young bosom, which now, by a sudden growth, became quick with a woman's impulse, and she had owned to herself that she did love him. He was dearer to her, she found, than all

in the world beside. Fondly as she loved her sister, sweet to her as were her mother's caresses, their love was not as precious to her as his might be. And then she remembered what he was, what was the manner of his life, what his character; how different he was from Alaric or Harry Norman; she remembered this, and knew that her love was an unhappy passion. Herself she would have sacrificed; prisoner as he had been, debtor as he was, drunkard, penniless, and a spendthrift, she would not have hesitated to take him for her guide through life, and have done what a woman might to guide him in return. But she would not sacrifice her mother. She saw now why Charley was not asked, and silently acquiesced in his banishment.

She was not yet quite seventeen. Not yet seventeen! the reader will say. She was still such a child, and yet arguing to herself about spendthrift debtors and self-sacrifice! All this bombast at sixteen and a-half! No, my ungentle reader, not all this bombast at sixteen and a-half. The bombast is mine. It is my fault if I cannot put into fitting language the thoughts which God put into her young heart. In her mind's soliloquy, Charley's vices were probably all summed up in the one word, unsteady. "Why is he so unsteady? Why does he like these wicked things?" And then as regarded Mrs. Woodward, she did but make a resolve that not even for her love would she add to the un-

happiness of that loving tenderest mother. There was no bombast in Katie, either expressed or unexpressed.

After much consideration on the matter, Mrs. Woodward determined that she would ask Charley down to the cottage. In the first place, she felt bitterly her apparent ingratitude to him. When last they had been together, the day after Katie's escape at the bridge, when his tale had just been read, she had told him, with the warmth of somewhat more than friendly affection, that henceforth they must be more than common friends. She had promised him her love, she had almost promised him the affection and care of a mother; and now, how was she keeping her promise? He had fallen into misfortune, and she had immediately deserted him. Over and over again she said to herself that her first duty was to her own child; but even with this reflection, she could hardly reconcile herself to her neglect of him.

And then, moreover, she felt that it was impossible that all their friendship, all their mutual regard, should die away suddenly without any explanation. An attempt to bring about this would not cure Katie's love. If this were done, would not Katie always think of Charley's wrong?

And, lastly, it was quite clear that Katie had put a check on her own heart. A meeting now might be the reverse of dangerous. It would be well that Katie should use herself to be with him now again; well, at any rate, that she should

see him once before their proposed journey to Torquay ; for, alas ! the journey to Torquay was now insisted on by the London physician—in-
sisted on, although he opined with a nod, somewhat less authoritative than his former nod, that the young lady was touched by no organic disease.

“ And then,” said Mrs. Woodward to herself, “ his heart is good, and I will speak openly to him.” And so Charley was again invited to the cottage. After some demurring between him and Norman, he accepted the invitation.

Mrs. Val’s dance had taken place in June, and it was now late in October. Four months had intervened, and during that period Charley had seen none of the Woodwards. He had over and over again tried to convince himself that this was his own fault, and that he had no right to accuse Mrs. Woodward of ingratitude. But he was hardly successful. He did feel, in spite of himself, that he had been dropped because of the disgrace attaching to his arrest ; that Mrs. Woodward had put him aside as being too bad to associate with her and her daughters ; and that it was intended that henceforth they should be strangers.

He still had Katie’s purse, and he made a sort of resolve that as long as he kept that in his possession, as long as he had that near his heart, he would not go near Norah Geraghty. This resolution he had kept ; but though he did not go

to the Cat and Whistle, he frequented other places which were as discreditable, or more so. He paid many very fruitless visits to Mr. M'Ruen, contrived to run up a score with the proprietor of the dancing saloon in Holborn; and was as negligent as ever in the matter of the lock entries.

"It is no use now," he would say to himself, when some aspirations for higher things came across his heart; "it is too late now to go back. Those who once cared for me have thrown me over." And then he would again think of Waterloo Bridge, and the monument, and of what might be done for threepence or fourpence in a pistol gallery.

And then at last came the invitation to Hampton. He was once more to talk to Mrs. Woodward, and associate with Linda—to see Katie once more. When he had last left the house he had almost been as much at home as any one of the family; and now he was to return to it as a perfect stranger. As he travelled down with Norman by the railway, he could not help feeling that the journey was passing over too quickly. He was like a prisoner going to his doom. As he crossed the bridge, and remembered how Katie had looked when she lay struggling in the water, how he had been fêted and caressed after pulling her out, he made a bitter contrast between his present position and that which he then enjoyed. Were it not for very

shame, he would have found it in his heart to return to London.

And then in a moment they were at the cottage door. The road had never been so short. Norman, who had not fathomed Charley's feelings was happy and light-hearted—more so than was usual with him, for he was unaffectedly glad to witness Charley's return to Hampton. He rang sharply at the door, and when it was opened, walked with happy confidence into the drawing-room. Charley was bound to follow him, and there he found himself again in presence of Mrs. Woodward and her daughters. Katie would fain have absented herself, but Mrs. Woodward knew that the first meeting could take place in no more favourable manner.

Mrs. Woodward bade him welcome with a collected voice, and assured, if not easy, manner. She shook hands with him cordially, and said a few words as to her pleasure of seeing him again. Then he next took Linda's hand, and she too made a little speech, more awkwardly than her mother, saying something *mal apropos* about the very long time he had been away; and then she laughed with a little titter, trying to recover herself. And at last he came to Katie. There was no getting over it. She also stretched out her now thin hand, and Charley, as he touched it, perceived how altered she was. Katie looked up into his face, and tried to speak, but she could not articulate a word. She looked into his face,

and then at Mrs. Woodward, as though imploring her mother's aid to tell her how to act or what to say; and then finding her power of utterance impeded by rising sobs, she dropped back again on her seat, and hid her face upon the arm of the sofa.

"Our Katie is not so well as when you last saw her—is she Charley?" said Mrs. Woodward. "She is very weak just now; but thank God she has, we believe, no dangerous symptoms about her. You have heard, perhaps, that we are going to Torquay for the winter?"

And so they went on talking. The ice was broken and the worst was over. They did not talk, it is true, as in former days; there was no confidence between them now, and each of them felt that there was none; but they nevertheless fell into a way of unembarrassed conversation, and were all tolerably at their ease.

And then they went to dinner, and Charley was called on to discuss Admiralty matters with Uncle Bat; and then he and Norman sat after dinner a little longer than usual; and then they had a short walk, during which Katie remained at home; but short as it was, it was quite long enough, for it was very dull; and then there was tea; and then more constrained conversation, in which Katie took no part whatever; and then Mrs. Woodward and the girls took their candles, and Charley went over to the inn on the other side of the road. Oh! how different

was this from the former evenings at Surbiton Cottage.

Charley had made no plan for any special interview with Katie, had, indeed, not specially thought about it at all; but he could not but feel an intense desire to say one word to her in private, and learn whether all her solicitude for him was over. "Dear Charley, you will be steady; won't you?" Those had been her last words to him. Nothing could have been sweeter; although they brought before his mind the remembrance of his own unworthy career, they had been inexpressibly sweet, as testifying the interest she felt in him. And was that all over now? Had it all been talked away by Mrs. Woodward's cautious wisdom, because he had lain for one night in a sponging house?

But the next day came, and as it passed, it appeared to him that no opportunity of speaking one word to her was to be allowed to him.

She did not, however, shun him. She was not up at breakfast, but she sat next to him at lunch, and answered him when he spoke to her.

In the evening they again went out to walk, and then Charley found that Linda and Norman went one way, and that he was alone with Mrs. Woodward. It was manifest to him that this arrangement had been made on purpose, and he felt that he was to undergo some private conversation, the nature of which he dreaded. He dreaded it very much; when he heard it, it made

him very wretched; but it was not the less full of womanly affection and regard for him.

"I cannot let you go from us, Charley," began Mrs. Woodward, "without telling you how deep a sorrow it has been to me to be so long without seeing you. I know you have thought me very ungrateful.

"Ungrateful, Mrs. Woodward. Oh, no! I have done nothing to make gratitude necessary."

"Yes, Charley, you have—you have done much, too much. You have saved my child's life."

"Oh, no, I did not," said he; "besides, I hate gratitude. I don't want any one to be grateful to me. Gratitude is almost as offensive as pity. Of course I pulled Katie out of the water when she fell in; and I would have done as much for your favourite cat." He said this with something of bitterness in his tone; it was not much, for though he felt bitterly he did not intend to show it; but Mrs. Woodward's ear did not fail to catch it.

"Don't be angry with us, Charley; don't make us more unhappy than we already are."

"Unhappy!" said he, as though he thought that all the unhappiness in the world was at the present moment reserved for his own shoulders.

"Yes, we are not so happy now as we were when you were last with us. Poor Katie is very ill."

"But you don't think there is any danger, Mrs. Woodward?"

There are many tones in which such a question may be asked—and is asked from day to day,—all differing widely from each other, and giving evidence of various shades of feeling in the speaker. Charley involuntarily put his whole heart into it. Mrs. Woodward could not but love him for feeling for her child, though she would have given so much that the two might have been indifferent to each other.

“I do not know,” she said. “We hope not. But I should not be sent with her to Torquay if she were not very ill. She is very ill, and it is absolutely essential that nothing should be allowed to excite her painfully. I tell you this, Charley, to excuse our apparent unkindness in not having you here sooner.”

Charley walked by her in silence. Why should his coming excite her more than Norman’s? What could there be painful to her in seeing him? Did the fact of his having been arrested attach to his visit any peculiar probability of excitement?

“Do not suppose that we have not thought of you,” continued Mrs. Woodward. “We have all done so daily. Nay, I have done so myself all but hourly. Ah, Charley, you will never know how truly I love you.”

Charley’s heart was as soft as it was inflammable. He was utterly unable to resist such tenderness as Mrs. Woodward showed to him. He had made a little resolution to be stiff and

stern, to ask for no favour and to receive none, not to palliate his own conduct, or to allow Mrs. Woodward to condemn it. He had felt that as the Woodwards had given him up, they had no longer any right to criticize him. To them, at least one and all, to Mrs. Woodward and her daughters, his conduct had been *sans reproche*. They had no cause to upbraid him on their own account; and they had now abandoned the right to do so on his own. With such assumed sternness he began his walk; but now it had all melted before the warmth of one tender word from a woman's mouth.

"I know I am not worth thinking about," said he.

"Do not say so, pray do not say so. Do not think that we say so to ourselves. I grieve for your faults, Charley: I know they are grievous and wicked; but I know how much there is of good in you. I know how clever you are, how excellent your heart is, how sweet your disposition. I trust, I trust in God, you may reform, and be the pride of your friends. I trust that I yet may be proud of knowing you——"

"No one will ever be proud of me," said Charley.

"We shall all be proud of you, if you will resolve to turn away from childish things now that you are no longer a child—your faults are faults which as yet may be so easily relinquished. But, oh, Charley——" and then Mrs. Woodward

paused and looked wistfully into his face. She had now come to the point at which she had to make her prayer to him. She had resolved to tell him the cause of her fears, and to trust to his honour to free her from them. Now was the moment for her to speak out; but now that the moment was come, the words were wanting.

She looked wistfully into his face, but he did not even guess what was her meaning. He knew the secret of his own love; but he did not know that Katie also had her secret. He had never dreamt that his faults, among all their ill effects, had paled her cheek, made wan her arm, silenced her voice, and dimmed her eye. When he had heard Katie cough, he had in nowise connected the hated sound with his own arrest. He had thought only of his own love.

“Oh! Charley—I know I can trust you,” said Mrs. Woodward. “I know you are gentle and good—you will be gentle and good to us, will you not? you will not make us all wretched?”

Charley declared that he would not willingly do anything to cause pain to any of them.

“No—I am sure you will not. And therefore, Charley, you must not see Katie any more.”

At this time they had turned off the road into a shady lane, in which the leaves of autumn were now beginning to fall. A path led over a stile away from the lane into the fields, and Mrs. Woodward had turned towards it, as though intending to continue their walk in that direction.

But when she had reached the stile, she had sat down upon the steps of it, and Charley had been listening to her, standing by, leaning on the top rail.

“And therefore, Charley, you must not see Katie any more.” So much she said, and then she looked into his face with imploring eyes.

It was impossible that he should answer her at once. He had to realize so much that had hitherto not been expressed between them, before he could fully understand what she meant; and then he was called on to give up so much, that he now learnt for the first time was within his reach! Before he could answer her, he had to assure himself that Katie loved him; he had to understand that her love for one so abandoned was regarded as fatal; and he had to reply to a mother's prayer that he would remove himself from the reach of a passion which to him was worth all the world beside.

He turned his face away from her, but still stood leaning on the stile, with his arms folded on it. She watched him for a while in silence, and at last she saw big tears drop from his face on to the dust of the path on the further side. There they came rolling down, large globules of sorrow. Nothing is so painful to a woman as a man in tears, and Mrs. Woodward's heart was wrung to its very core. Why was he not like Alaric or Norman, so that she might make him welcome to her daughter's heart!

She leant towards him and put her hand caressingly on his arm. "It shall be so, shall it not, Charley?"

"Oh, of course, if you say so."

"I have your word then—if I have your word that will be a perfect bond. I have your word, have I not, Charley?"

"What!—never see her in my life," said he, turning almost fiercely on Mrs. Woodward.

"That, you know, is more than you can promise," said she, very gently. "It is not to the letter of the promise that I would bind you, but to its spirit. You understand well what I mean; you know what I wish, and why I wish it. Say that you will obey my wish, and I will leave the mode of doing it to your own honour. Have I your promise?"

He shook her hand off his arm almost roughly, though unintentionally, and turning sharply round leant with his back against the stile. The traces of tears were still on his cheeks, but he was no longer crying; there was, however, a look on his face of heart-rending sorrow which Mrs. Woodward could hardly endure.

"I do understand you," said he, "and, since you demand it, I will promise;" and then they walked home side by side without interchanging a single word.

When they reached the house, Mrs. Woodward went to her room, and Charley found himself alone with Katie.

"I hope you find yourself better this evening," said he.

"Oh, I am quite well," she answered, with her sweetest, kindest voice; "I am quite well, only sometimes I am a little weak."

He walked up to the window as though to pass on to the lawn; but the season was too far advanced for that, and the window was locked. He retraced his steps, therefore, and passing out of the drawing-room into the hall, stood at the open front door till he heard Mrs. Woodward come down. Then he followed her into the room.

"Good bye," he said to her, when she prepared to go for the night; "I shall start by the early train to-morrow, and shall not see you." She pressed his hand, but he in nowise returned the pressure. "Good bye, Linda; good bye, Katie; good night, Captain Cuttwater." And so he went his way, as Adam did when he was driven out of Paradise.

Early on the following morning, the cook, while engaged in her most matutinal duties, was disturbed by a ring at the front door. She, and she only of the household, was up, and as she had not completed her toilet with much minuteness, she was rather embarrassed when, on opening the door, she saw Mr. Charles Tudor.

"I beg your pardon, cook, for troubling you so early; but I have left something in the drawing-room. I can find it myself;" and, so saying,

he hurried into the room so as to prevent the servant from following him.

Katie had a well-worn, well-known little work-box, which, in years now long past, had been given to her either by Alaric or Harry. Doubtless she had now work-boxes grander both in appearance and size; but, nevertheless, whether from habit or from choice, her custom was, in her daily needle-work, to use this old friend. Often and often had Charley played with it many wicked pranks. Once, while Katie had as yet no pretension to be grown up, he had put a snail into it, and had incurred her severe displeasure. He had stuffed it full of acorns, and been rewarded by being pelted with them round the lawn; and had filled it with nuts, for which he had not found it so difficult to obtain pardon. He knew every hole and corner in it; he was intimate with all her little feminine knick-knacks—her silver thimble, her scissors, her bit of wax, and the yard-measure, which twisted itself in and out of an ivory cottage—he knew them all, as well as though they were his own; and he knew also where the work-box stood.

He closed the door behind him, and then with his quickest motion raised the lid and put within the box, just under the bit of work on which she was employed, a light small paper parcel. It contained the purse which she had worked for him, and had given to him with such sweet affection at the Chiswick flower-show.

CHAPTER II.

HOW APOLLO SAVED THE NAVVY.

ABOUT the middle of November, the Woodwards went to Torquay, and remained there till the middle of the following May. Norman went with them to see them properly settled in their new lodgings, and visited them at Christmas, and once again during their stay there. He then went down to fetch them home, and when they all returned, informed Charley, with whom he was still living, that he was engaged to Linda. It was arranged, he said, that they were to be married in August.

On the whole, the journey to Torquay was considered to have been successful. Katie's health had been the only object in going there, and the main consideration while they remained. She returned, if not well, at any rate not worse. She had got through the winter, and her lungs were still pronounced to be free from those dreadful signs of decay, the name of which has broken so many mothers' hearts, and sent dismay into the breasts of so many fathers. During her sojourn at Torquay she had grown much, and, as is often the case with those who grow quickly, she had become weak and thin. People at

Torquay are always weak and thin, and Mrs. Woodward had not, therefore, been much frightened at this. Her spirits, though by no means such as they had been in former days, had improved; she had occupied herself more than she had done during the last two months at Hampton, and had, at least so Mrs. Woodward fondly flattered herself, ceased to be always thinking of Charley Tudor. It was quite clear that she had firmly made up her mind to some certain line of conduct with reference to him; she never mentioned his name, nor was it mentioned in her hearing by either her mother or sister during their stay at Torquay. When Norman came down, she always found some opportunity of inquiring from him as to Charley's health and welfare; but she did this in a manner which showed that she had succeeded in placing her feelings wonderfully under control.

On that Monday morning, on which Charley had returned to town after his early visit to her work-box, she had not failed to find the purse. Linda was with her when she did so, but she had contrived so to conceal her emotion, that nothing was seen and nothing suspected. She felt at once that it was intended that all intercourse should be broken off between her and Charley. She knew instinctively that this was the effect of some precaution on her mother's part, and with a sad bosom and a broken heart, she acquiesced in it. She said nothing, even to

herself, of the truth and constancy of her love ; she made no mental resolution against any other passion ; she did not even think whether or no she might ever be tempted to love another ; but she felt a dumb aching numbness about her heart, and, looking round about her, she seemed to feel that all was dark and dismal.

And so they sojourned through the winter at Torquay. The effort which Katie made was undoubtedly salutary to her. She took again to her work and her lessons—studies we should probably now call them—and before she left Torquay, she had again learned how to smile ; but not to laugh with that gay ringing silver laughter, ringing, but yet not loud, which to Charley's ear had been as sweet as heavenly music. During this time Uncle Bat remained at Hampton, keeping bachelor's house by himself.

And then while they were at Torquay, Linda and Norman became engaged to each other. Their loves were honest, true, and happy, but not of a nature to give much scope to a novelist of a romantic turn. Linda knew she was not Norman's first love, and requited Norman, of course, by telling him something, not much, of Alaric's falseness to her. Norman made but one ungenerous stipulation. It was this:—that in marrying him Linda must give up all acquaintance with her brother-in-law. He would never, he said, be the means of separating two

sisters ; she and Gertrude might have such intercourse together as their circumstances might render possible ; but it was quite out of the question that either he, Harry Norman, or his wife should ever again associate with Alaric Tudor.

In such matters Linda had always been guided by others ; so she sighed and promised, and the engagement was duly ratified by all the parties concerned.

We must now return to Charley. When he got back to town, he felt that he had lost his amulet ; his charm had gone from him, and he had nothing now left whereby to save himself from ruin and destruction. He was utterly flung over by the Woodward ; that now was to him an undoubted fact. When Mrs. Woodward told him that he was never again to see Katie, that was, of course, tantamount to turning him out of the cottage. It might be all very well to talk to him of affection and friendship ; but it was manifest that no further signs of either were to be shown to him. He had proved himself to be unworthy, and was no more to be considered as one of the circle which made the drawing-room at Surbiton Cottage its centre. He could not quite explain all this to Norman, as he could not tell him what had passed between him and Mrs. Woodward ; but he said enough to make his friend know that he intended to go to Hampton no more.

It would be wrong, perhaps, to describe Charley as being angry with Mrs. Woodward. He knew that she was only doing her duty by her child; he knew that she was actuated by the purest and best of motives; he was not able to say a word against her even to himself; but, nevertheless, he desired to be revenged on her. He desired to be revenged on her—not by injuring her, not by injuring Katie—but by injuring himself. He would make Mrs. Woodward feel what she had done, by rushing, himself, on his own ruin. He would return to the Cat and Whistle—he would keep his promise and marry Norah Geraghty—he would go utterly to destruction, and then Mrs. Woodward would know and feel what she had done in banishing him from her daughter's presence!

Having arrived at this magnanimous resolution after a fortnight's doubt and misery, he proceeded to put his purpose into execution. It was now some considerable time since he had been at the Cat and Whistle; he had had no further visit from Mrs. Davis, but he had received one or two notes both from her and Norah, to which, as long as he had Katie's purse, he was resolute in not replying; messages also had reached him from the landlady through Dick Scatterall, in the last of which he was reminded that there was a trifle due at the bar, and another trifle for money lent.

One night, having lashed himself up to a fit

state of wretched desperation, he found himself at the well-known corner of the street leading out of the Strand. On his journey thither he had been trying to realize to himself what it would be to be the husband of Norah Geraghty, what would be the joy of returning to a small house in some dingy suburb and finding her to receive him. Could he really love her when she would be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the wife of his bosom and the mother of his children? In such a case would he ever be able to forget that he had known Katie Woodward? Would those words of hers ever ring in his ears, then as now—"You will be steady, dear Charley; won't you?"

There are those who boast that a gentleman must always be a gentleman; that a man, let him marry whom he will, raises or degrades his wife to the level of his own condition, and that King Cophetua could share his throne with a beggar-woman without sullyng its splendour or diminishing its glory. How a king may fare in such a condition, the author, knowing little of kings, will not pretend to say; nor yet will he offer an opinion whether a lowly match be fatally injurious to a marquess, duke, or earl; but this he will be bold to affirm, that a man from the ordinary ranks of the upper classes, who has had the nurture of a gentleman, prepares for himself a hell on earth in taking a wife from any rank much below his own,—a hell on earth and,

alas ! too often another hell elsewhere also. He must either leave her or loathe her. She may be endowed with all those moral virtues which should adorn all women, and which, thank God, are common to women in this country ; but he will have to endure habits, manners, and ideas which the close contiguity of married life will force upon his disgusted palate, and which must banish all love. Man by instinct desires in his wife something softer, sweeter, more refined than himself ; and though in failing to obtain this, the fault may be all his own, he will not on that account the more easily reconcile himself to the want.

Charley knew that he was preparing such misery for himself. As he went along, determined to commit a moral suicide by allying himself to the bar-maid, he constrained himself to look with his mind's eye 'upon this picture and on this.'

He had felt of what nature was the sort of love with which Katie Woodward had inspired his heart ; and he felt also what was that other sort of love to which the charms of Norah Geraghty had given birth.

Norah was a fine girl, smart enough in her outward apparel, but apt occasionally to disclose uncomfortable secrets, if from any accident more than her outward apparel might momentarily become visible. When dressed up for a Sunday excursion she had her attractions, and even on

ordinary evenings, a young man such as Charley, after imbibing two or three glasses of spirits and water, and smoking two or three cigars, might find her to be what some of her friends would have called "very good company." As to her mind, had Charley been asked about it, he would probably have said that he was ignorant whether she had any; but this he did know, that she was sharp and quick, alert in counting change, and gifted with a peculiar power of detecting bad coin by the touch. Such was Norah Geraghty, whom Charley was to marry.

And then that other portrait was limned with equal accuracy before his eyes. Katie, with all her juvenile spirit, was delightfully feminine; every motion of hers was easy, and every form into which she could twist her young limbs was graceful. She had all the nice ideas and ways which a girl acquires when she grows from childhood to woman's stature, under the eye of a mother who is a lady. Katie could be untidy on occasions; but her very untidiness was inviting. All her belongings were nice; she had no hidden secrets, the chance revealing of which would disgrace her. She might come in from her island palaces in a guise which would call down some would-be-censorious exclamation from her mother; but all others but her mother would declare that Katie in such moments was more lovely than ever. And Katie's beauty pleased more than the eye—it came home to the mind

and heart of those who saw her. It spoke at once to the intelligence, and required, for its full appreciation, an exercise of the mental faculties, as well as animal senses. If the owner of that outward form were bad or vile, one would be inclined to say that nature must have lied, when she endowed her with so fair an index. Such was Katie Woodward, whom Charley was not to marry.

As he turned down Norfolk Street, he thought of all this, as the gambler, sitting with his razor before him with which he intends to cut his throat, may be supposed to think of the stakes which he has failed to win, and the fortune he has failed to make. Norah Geraghty was Charley's razor, and he plunged boldly into the Cat and Whistle, determined to draw it at once across his weasand, and sever himself for ever from all that is valuable in the world.

It was now about eleven o'clock, at which hour the Cat and Whistle generally does its most stirring trade. This Charley knew ; but he also knew that the little back parlour, even if there should be an inmate in it at the time of his going in, would soon be made private for his purposes.

When he went in, Mrs. Davis was standing behind the counter, dressed in a cap of wonderful grandeur, and a red tabinet gown, which rustled among the pots and jars, sticking out from her to a tremendous width, inflated by its own mag-

nificence and a substratum of crinoline. Charley had never before seen her arrayed in such royal robes. Her accustomed maid was waiting as usual on the guests, and another girl also was assisting ; but Norah did not appear to Charley's first impatient glance.

He at once saw that something wonderful was going on. The front parlour was quite full, and the ministering angel was going in and out quickly, with more generous supplies of the gifts of Bacchus than were usual at the Cat and Whistle. Gin and water was the ordinary tippie in the front parlour ; and any one of its denizens inclined to cut a dash above his neighbours generally did so with a bottom of brandy. But now Mrs. Davis was mixing port-wine negus as fast as her hands could make it.

And then there were standing round the counter four or five customers, faces well known to Charley, all of whom seemed to be dressed with a splendour second only to that of the landlady. One man had on an almost new brown frock coat with a black velvet collar, and white trousers. Two had blue swallow-tailed coats with brass buttons ; and a fourth, a dashing young lawyer's clerk from Clement's Inn, was absolutely stirring a mixture, which he called a mint julep, with a yellow kid glove dangling out of his hand.

They all stood back when Charley entered ; they had been accustomed to make way for him in

former days, and though he had latterly ceased to rule at the Cat and Whistle as he once did, they were too generous to trample on fallen greatness. He gave his hand to Mrs. Davis across the counter, and asked her, in the most unconcerned voice which he could assume, what was in the wind. She tittered and laughed, told him he had come too late for the fun, and then retreated into the little back parlour, whither he followed her. She was at any rate in a good humour, and seemed quite inclined to forgive his rather uncivil treatment of her notes and messages.

In the back parlour Charley found more people drinking, and among them, three ladies of Mrs. Davis's acquaintance. They were all very fine in their apparel, and very comfortable as to their immediate employment, for each had before her a glass of hot tippie. One of them, a florid-faced dame about fifty, Charley had seen before, and knew to be the wife of a pork butcher and sausage maker in the neighbourhood. Directly he entered the room, Mrs. Davis formally introduced him to them all. "A very particular friend of mine, Mrs. Allchops, and of Norah's, too, I can assure you," said Mrs. Davis.

"Ah, Mr. Tudor, and how be you; a sight of you is good for sore eyes," said she of the sausages, rising, with some difficulty, from her chair, and grasping Charley's hand with all the pleasant cordiality of old friendship.

"The gen'leman seems to be a little too late

for the fair," said a severe lodging-house keeper from Cecil-street.

"Them as wills not, when they may,
When they wills they shall have nay ;"

said a sarcastic rival bar-maid from a neighbouring public, to whom all Norah's wrongs and all Mr. Tudor's false promises were fully known.

Charley was not the fellow to allow himself to be put down, even by feminine raillery ; so he plucked up his spirit, sad as he was at heart, and replied to them all *en masse*.

"Well, ladies, what's in the wind now? You seem to be very cosy here, all of you : suppose you allow me to join you."

"With a 'eart and a 'alf," said Mrs. Allchops, squeezing her corpulence up to the end of the horse-hair sofa, so as to make room for him between herself and the poetic bar-maid. "I'd sooner have a gen'leman next to me nor a lady hany day of the week ; so come and sit down, my birdie."

But Charley, as he was about to accept the invitation of his friend Mrs. Allchops, caught Mrs. Davis's eye, and followed her out of the room into the passage. "Step up to the landing, Mr. Tudor," said she ; and Charley stepped up. "Come in here, Mr. Tudor—you won't mind my bed-room for once," and Charley followed her in, not minding her bed-room.

"Of course you know what has happened, Mr. Tudor?" said she.

"Divil a bit," said Charley.

"Laws now—don't you, indeed? well, that is odd."

"How the deuce should I know — where's Norah?"

"Why—she's at Gravesend."

"At Gravesend — you don't mean to say she's ——"

"I just do then; she's just gone and got herself spliced to Peppermint this morning. They had the banns said these last three Sundays; and this morning they was at St. Martin's at eight o'clock, and has been here junketing ever since, and now they're away to Gravesend."

"Gravesend!" said Charley, struck by the suddenness of his rescue, as the gambler would have been had some sudden stranger seized the razor at the moment when it was lifted to his throat.

"Yes, Gravesend," said Mrs. Davis; "and they'll come up home to his own house by the first boat to-morrow."

"So Norah's married!" said Charley, with a slight access of sentimental softness in his voice.

"She's been and done it now, Mr. Tudor, and no mistake; and it's better so, a'n't it? Why, Lord love you, she'd never have done for you, you know; and she's the very article for such a man as Peppermint."

There was something good-natured in this, and so Charley felt it. As long as Mrs. Davis could do anything to assist her cousin's views,

by endeavouring to seduce or persuade her favourite lover into a marriage, she left no stone unturned, working on her cousin's behalf. But now, now that all those hopes were over, now that Norah had consented to sacrifice love to prudence, why should Mrs. Davis quarrel with an old friend any longer? why should not things be made pleasant to him as to the others?

“And now, Mr. Tudor, come down, and drink a glass to their healths, and wish 'em both well, and don't mind what them women says to you. You're well out of a mess; and now it's all over, I'm glad it is as it is.”

Charley went down and took his glass and drank prosperity to the bride and bridegroom. The sarcastic rival bar-maid said little snappish things to him, offered him a bit of green ribbon, and told him that if he “minded hisself,” somebody might, perhaps, take him yet. But Charley was proof against this.

He sat there about half-an-hour, and then went his way, shaking hands with all the ladies and bowing to the gentlemen. On the following day, as soon as he left his office, he called at the Cat and Whistle, and paid his little bill there, and said his last farewell to Mrs. Davis. He never visited the house again. Now that Norah was gone the attractions were not powerful. Reader, you and I will at the same time say our farewells to Mrs. Davis, to Mr. Peppermint also and to his bride. If thou art an elegant reader,

unaccustomed to the contamination of pipes and glasses, I owe thee an apology in that thou hast been caused to linger awhile among things so unsavoury. But if thou art one who of thine own will hast taken thine ease in thine inn, hast enjoyed the freedom of a sanded parlour, hast known 'that ginger is hot in the mouth,' and made thyself light-hearted with a yard of clay, then thou wilt confess there are worse establishments than the Cat and Whistle, less generous landladies than Mrs. Davis.

When all this happened the Woodward had not been long at Torquay. Mr. Peppermint was made a happy man before Christmas ; and therefore Charley was left to drift before the wind without the ballast of any lady's love to keep him in sailing trim. Poor fellow ! he had had wealth on one side, beauty and love on another, and on the third all those useful qualities which Miss Geraghty has been described as possessing. He had been thus surrounded by feminine attractions, and had lost them all. Two of those, from whom he had had to choose, had married others, and he was banished from the presence of the third. Under such circumstances what could he do but drift about the gulfs and straits of the London ocean without compass or rudder, and bruise his timbers against all the sunken rocks that might come in his way.

And then Norman told him of his coming marriage, and Charley was more sad than ever.

And thus matters went on with him till the period at which our story will be resumed at the return of the Woodwards to Hampton.

In the meantime another winter and another spring had passed over Alaric's head, and now the full tide of the London season found him still rising, and receiving every day more of the world's homage. Sir Gregory Hardlines had had every reason to praise his own judgment in selecting Mr. Tudor for the vacant seat among the Magi.

From that moment all had gone smooth with Sir Gregory; there was no one to interfere with his hobby or run counter to his opinion. Alaric was all that was conciliatory and amiable in a colleague. He was not submissive and cringing; and had he been so Sir Gregory, to do him justice, would have been disgusted; but neither was he self-opinionated nor obstinate like Mr. Jobbles. He insisted on introducing no crotchets of his own, and allowed Sir Gregory all the credit of the commission.

This all went on delightfully for a while; but on one morning, early in May, Alaric somewhat disturbed the equanimity of his chief by communicating to him his intention of becoming a candidate for the representation of the borough of Strathbogy, at the next general election which was to take place very shortly after the close of the session. Sir Gregory was dumfounded and expressed himself as incapable of believing

that Tudor really meant to throw up 1,200*l.* a year on the mere speculation of its being possible that he should get into Parliament. Men in general, as Sir Gregory endeavoured to explain with much eloquence, go into Parliament for the sake of getting places of 1,200*l.* a year. For what earthly reason should Alaric again be going to the bottom of the ladder, seeing that he had already attained a rung of such very respectable altitude ! Alaric said to himself, "Excelsior !" To Sir Gregory he suggested that it might be possible that he should get into Parliament without giving up his seat at the board. Earth and Heaven, it might be hoped, would not come together even though so great a violence as this should be done to the time-honoured practices of the Government. Sir Gregory suggested that it was contrary to the constitution. Alaric replied that the constitution had been put upon to as great an extent before this, and had survived. Sir Gregory regarded it as all but impossible, and declared it to be quite unusual. Alaric rejoined that something of the same kind had been done at the Poor Law Board. To this Sir Gregory replied, gently pluming his feathers with conscious greatness, that at the Poor Law Board the chief of the commission was the Parliamentary officer. Alaric declared that he was perfectly willing to give way if Sir Gregory would go into the House himself. To this Sir Gregory demurred ; not feeling himself called on to change the sphere of

his utility. And so the matter was debated between them, till at last Sir Gregory promised to consult his friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The ice was thus broken, and Alaric was quite contented with the part which he had taken in the conversation.

With his own official prospects, in spite of the hazardous step which he now meditated, he was quite contented. He had an idea that in the public service of the Government, as well as in all other services, men who were known to be worth their wages would find employment. He was worth his wages. Men who could serve their country well, who could adapt themselves to work, who were practical, easy in harness, able to drive and patient to be driven, were not unfortunately as plentiful as blackberries. He began to perceive that a really useful man could not be found miscellaneously under every hat in Pall Mall. He knew his own value, and did not fear but that he should find a price for it in some of the world's markets. He would not, therefore, allow himself to be deterred from further progress by any fear that in doing so he risked the security of his daily bread; no, not though the risk extended to his wife; she had taken him for better or worse; if the better came she should share it; if the worse, why let her share that also, with such consolation as his affection might be able to offer.

There was something noble in this courage,

in this lack of prudence. It may be a question whether men, in marrying, do not become too prudent. A single man may risk anything, says the world ; but a man with a wife should be sure of his means. Why so ? A man and woman are but two units. A man and a woman with ten children are but twelve units. It is sad to see a man starving—sad to see a woman starving—very sad to see children starving. But how often does it come to pass that the man who will work is seen begging his bread ? we may almost say never—unless, indeed, he be a clergyman. Let the idle man be sure of his wife's bread before he marries her ; but the working man, one would say, may generally trust to God's goodness without fear.

With his official career Alaric was, as we have said, well contented ; in his stock-jobbing line of business he also had had moments of great exaltation, and some moments of considerable depression. The West Corks had vacillated. Both he and Undy had sold and bought and sold again ; and on the whole their stake in that stupendous national line of accommodation was not so all absorbing as it had once been. But if money had been withdrawn from this, it had been invested elsewhere, and the great sum borrowed from Madame Jaquêtanàpé's fortune had been in no part replaced—one full moiety of it had been taken—may one not say stolen ?—to enable Alaric and Undy to continue their speculations.

The undertaking to which they were now both wedded was the Limehouse and Rotherhithe Bridge. Of this Undy was chairman, and Alaric was a director, and at the present moment they looked for ample fortune, or what would nearly be ample ruin, to the decision of a committee of the House of Commons which was about to sit with the view of making inquiry as to the necessity of the bridge in question.

Mr. Nogo, the member for Mile End, was the parent of this committee. He asserted that the matter was one of such vital importance not only to the whole metropolis, but to the country at large, that the Government were bound in the first place to give a large subsidy towards building the bridge, and afterwards to pay a heavy annual sum towards the amount which it would be necessary to raise by tolls. Mr. Whip Vigil, on the other hand, declared on the part of Government that the bridge was wholly unnecessary; that if it were built it ought to be pulled down again; and that not a stiver could be given out of the public purse with such an object.

On this they joined issue. Mr. Nogo prayed for a committee, and Mr. Vigil, having duly consulted his higher brethren in the government, conceded this point. It may easily be conceived how high were now the hopes both of Undy Scott and Alaric Tudor. It was not at all necessary for them that the bridge should ever be built; that, probably, was out of the question;

that, very likely, neither of them regarded as a possibility. But if a committee of the House of Commons could be got to say that it ought to be built, they might safely calculate on selling out at a large profit.

But who were to sit on the Committee? That was now the all momentous question.

CHAPTER III.

THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE.

THERE is a sport prevalent among the downs in Hampshire to which, though not of a high degree, much interest is attached. Men and boys, with social glee and happy boyish shouts, congregate together on a hill side, at the mouth of a narrow hole, and proceed, with the aid of a well-trained bull-dog, to draw a badger. If the badger be at all commendable in his class this is by no means an easy thing to do. He is a sturdy animal, and well fortified with sharp and practised teeth ; his hide is of the toughest ; his paws of the strongest, and his dead power of resistance so great as to give him more than an equal chance with the bull-dog. The delighted sportsmen stand around listening to the growls and the snarls, the tearings, gnawings, and bloody struggles of the combatants within.—“ Well done, badger!—Well done, bull dog!—Draw him, bull dog!—Bite him, badger ! Each has his friends, and the interest of the moment is intense. The badger, it is true, has done no harm. He has been doing as it was appointed for him to do, poor badger, in that hole of his. But then, why were badgers created but to be drawn ? Why, indeed ; but to be drawn, or

not to be drawn, as the case may be? See! the bull-dog returns minus an ear, with an eye hanging loose, his nether lip torn off, and one paw bit through and through. Limping, dejected, beaten, glaring fearfully from his one remaining eye, the dog comes out; and the badger within rolls himself up with affected ease, hiding his bloody wounds from the public eye.

So it is that the sport is played in Hampshire; and so also at Westminster—with a difference, however. In Hampshire the two brutes retain ever their appointed natures. The badger is always a badger, and the bull-dog never other than a bull-dog. At Westminster there is a juster reciprocity of position. The badger when drawn has to take his place outside the hole and fight again for the home of his love; while the victorious bull-dog assumes a state of badgerdom, dons the skin of his enemy, and in his turn submits to be baited.

The pursuit is certainly full of interest, but it is somewhat deficient in dignity.

The parliamentary committee which was to sit with reference to the Limehouse and Rotherhithe bridge, had been one of the effects of a baiting match such as that above described. In this contest the enemies of the proud occupier of the den on the mountain side had not been contented to attempt to expel him with a single bull-dog. A whole pack had been let loose at his devoted throat. Bull-dogs had been at him, and

terriers, mastiffs, blood-hounds, lurchers and curs ; but so accustomed was he to the contest, so knowing in his fence, so ready with all the weapons given to him by nature, that, in spite of the numbers and venom of his enemies, he had contrived to hold his own. Some leading hounds had fallen to rise no more ; others had retreated, yelping to their kennels, to lie quiet for a while, till time might give them courage for a new attack. The country round was filled with the noise of their complaints and the yowling and howling of canine defeat. The gray old badger meanwhile sat proud in his hole, with all his badger kin around him, and laughed his well-known badger laugh at his disconsolate foes. Such a brock had not for years been seen in the country side ; so cool, so resolute, so knowing in his badger ways, so impregnable in his badger hole, and so good-humoured withal. He could bite full sore with those old teeth of his, and yet he never condescended to show them. A badger indeed of whom the country might well be proud !

But in the scramble of the fight some little curs had been permitted to run away with some little bones ; and in this way Mr. Nogo, the member for Mile End, had been allowed to carry his motion for a committee to inquire as to the expediency of the Government's advancing a quarter of a million towards the completion of that momentous national undertaking, the building of a bridge from Limehouse to Rotherhithe.

Very much had been said about this bridge, till men living out of the light of parliamentary life, nine hundred and ninety-nine men, that is, out of every thousand in the Queen's dominions, had begun to think that it was the great want of the age. Men living in the light, the supporters of the bridge as well as its enemies, knew very well that such an erection was quite unneeded, and would, in all probability, never be made. But then the firm of Blocks, Piles, and Cofferdam, who held a vast quantity of the bridge shares, and who were to be the contractors for building it, had an all-powerful influence in the borough of Limehouse. Where would Mr. Nogo be, if he did not cultivate the friendship of such men as Blocks, Piles, and Cofferdam?

And so Mr. Nogo, and those who acted with Mr. Nogo,—men, that is, who had little jobs of their own to do and in the doing of which Mr. Nogo occasionally assisted, Undy Scott, for instance, and such like—these men, I say, had talked much about the bridge; and gentlemen on the Treasury bench, who could have afforded to show up the folly of the scheme, and to put Mr. Nogo down at once, had he been alone, felt themselves under the necessity of temporising. As to giving a penny of the public money for such a purpose, that they knew was out of the question; that Mr. Nogo never expected; that they all knew Mr. Nogo never expected. But as Mr. Nogo's numbers were so respectable, it was neces-

sary to oppose him in a respectable parliamentary steady manner. He had fifteen with him! Had he been quite alone Mr. Vigil would have sneered him off; had he had but four to back him, the old badger would have laughed them out of face with a brace of grins. But fifteen——! Mr. Whip Vigil thought that the committee would be the most safe. So would the outer world be brought to confess that the interests of Limehouse and Poplar, Rotherhithe and Deptford had not been overlooked by a careful government.

But of whom was the committee to be made up? That was now the question which to Mr. Nogo, in his hour of temporary greatness, was truly momentous. He of course was to be the chairman, and to him appertained the duty of naming the other members—of naming them indeed—so much he could undoubtedly do by the strength of his own privilege. But of what use to name a string of men to whom Mr. Vigil would not consent? Mr. Nogo, did he do so, would have to divide on every name, and be beaten at every division. There would be no triumph in that. No; Mr. Nogo fully understood that his triumph must be achieved—if he were destined to a triumph—by an astute skill in his selection, not by an open choice of friends. He must obtain a balance on his side, but one in which the scale would lean so slightly to his side that Mr. Vigil's eyes might be deceived. Those who knew Mr. Vigil best, were inclined to surmise that such an arrange-

ment was somewhat beyond Mr. Nogo's political capacity. There is a proverb which goes to show that a certain little lively animal may be shaved if he be caught napping; but then the difficulty of so catching him is extreme.

Mr. Nogo at the head of the list put Mr. Vigil himself. This of course was a necessity to him—would that he could have dispensed with it! Then he named sundry supporters of the Government, sundry members also of the opposition; and he filled up the list with certain others who could not be regarded as sure supporters of one side or the other, but with whom, for certain reasons, he thought he might in this particular case be safe. Undy Scott was of course not among the number, as Mr. Nogo would only have damaged his cause by naming a man known to have a pecuniary interest in the concern.

The member for Mile End was doubtless sharp, but Mr. Vigil was sharper. His object was, in fact, merely to do his duty to the country by preventing a profuse and useless expenditure of money. His anxiety was a perfectly honest one—to save the exchequer namely. But the circumstances of the case required that he should fight the battle according to the tactics of the House, and he well understood how to do so.

When the list was read he objected to two or three names—only to two or three. They were not those of staunch enemies of the Government; nor did he propose in their places the names of

staunch supporters. He suggested certain gentlemen who, from their acquaintance with bridges, tolls, rivers, &c., would, as he said, be probably of use. He, also, was sure of his men, and as he succeeded with two of them, he was also pretty sure of his committee.

And then the committee met, and a lot of witnesses were in attendance. The chairman opened his case, and proceeded to prove, by the evidence of sundry most respectable men connected with Limehouse, and with the portions of Surrey and Kent lying immediately opposite to it, that the most intense desire for friendly and commercial intercourse was felt; but, that though absolutely close to each other, the districts were so divided by adverse circumstances, circumstances which were monstrous considering the advance of science in the nineteenth century, that the dearest friends were constrained to perpetual banishment from each other; and that the men of Kent were utterly unable to do any trade at Limehouse, and the Limehousians equally unable to carry on traffic in Surrey.

It was wonderful that the narrow river should be so effective for injury. One gentleman from Poplar proved that, having given his daughter in marriage to a man of Deptford, two years since, he had not yet been able to see her since that day. Her house, by the crow's flight, was but seven furlongs from his own; but as he kept no horse, he could not get to her residence with-

out a four hours' walk, for which he felt himself to be too old.. He was, however, able to visit his married daughter at Reading, and be back to tea. The witness declared that his life was made miserable by his being thus debarred from his child, and he wiped his eyes with his pocket-handkerchief, piteously, sitting there in front of the committee. In answer to Mr. Vigil he admitted that there might be a ferry, but stated that he did not know. Having had, from childhood, an aversion to the water he had not inquired. He was aware that some rash people had gone through the Tunnel, but for himself he did not think the Tunnel a safe mode of transit.

Another gentleman belonging to Rotherhithe, who was obliged to be almost daily at Blackwall, maintained two horses for the express purpose of going backwards and forwards, round by London Bridge. They cost him 70*l.* per annum each. Such a bridge as that now proposed, and which the gentleman declared that he regarded as an embryo monument of national glory, would save him 140*l.* per annum. He then proceeded to make a little speech about the spirit of the age, and the influence of routine, which he described as a gloomy gnome. But his oratory was cruelly cut short by Mr. Vigil, who demanded of him whether he ever used the river steamers. The witness shuddered fearfully as he assured the committee that he never did, and referred to the Cricket, whose boilers burst in the year 1842;

besides he had, he said, his things to carry with him.

Another witness told how unsafe was the transit of heavy goods by barge from one side of the river to another. He had had a cargo of marine stores which would go to sea before their time. The strong ebb of the tide, joined to the river current, had positively carried the barge away, and its course had not been stopped till it had drifted on shore at Purfleet. He acknowledged that something had transpired of the bargemen being drunk, but he had no knowledge himself that such had been the case. No other cargoes of his own had been carried away, but he had heard that such was often the case. He thought that the bridge was imperatively demanded. Would the tolls pay? He felt sure that they would. Why, then, should not the bridge be built as a commercial speculation, without government aid? He thought that in such cases a fostering government was bound to come forward and show the way. He had a few shares in the bridge himself. He had paid up 1*l.* a share. They were now worth 2*s.* 6*d.* each. They had been worth nothing before the committee had been ordered to sit. He declined to give any opinion as to what the shares would be worth if the money were granted.

Ladies at Limehouse proved that if there were a bridge they could save thirty shillings a year each, by buying their tea and sugar at Rother-

hithe ; and so singular are the usages of trade, that the ladies of Rotherhithe would benefit their husbands equally, and return the compliment by consuming the bread of Limehouse. The shores of Kent were pining for the beef of the opposite bank, and only too anxious to give in return the surplus stock of their own poultry.

“Let but a bridge be opened,” as was asserted by one animated vendor of rope, “and Poplar would soon rival Pimlico. Perhaps that might not be desirable in the eyes of men who lived in the purlieus of the Court, and who were desirous to build no new bridge, except that over the ornamental water in St. James’s Park.” Upon uttering which the rope-vendor looked at Mr. Vigil, as though he expected him to sink at once under the table.

Mr. Blocks, of the great firm of Blocks, Piles, and Cofferdam, then came forward. He declared that a large sum of money was necessary before this great national undertaking could be begun in a spirit worthy of the nineteenth century. It was intended to commence the approaches on each side of the river a quarter of a mile from the first abutment of the bridge, in order to acquire the necessary altitude without a steep ascent. He then described what a glorious bridge this bridge would be ; how it would eclipse all bridges that had ever been built ; how the fleets of all nations would ride under it ; how many hundred thousand square feet of wrought iron

would be consumed in its construction; how many tons of Portland stone in the abutments, parapets, and supporting walls; how much timber would be buried twenty fathoms deep in the mud of the river; how many miles of paving stone would be laid down. Mr. Blocks went on with his astonishing figures till the committee were bewildered, and even Mr. Vigil, though well used to calculations, could hardly raise his mind to the dimensions of the proposed undertaking.

The engineer followed, and showed how easily this great work could be accomplished. There was no difficulty, literally none. The patronage of the Crown was all that was required. The engineer was asked whether by the word patronage he meant money, and after a little laughing and a few counter questions, he admitted that, in his estimation, patronage and money did mean the same thing.

Such was the case made out by the promoters of the bridge, and the chairman and his party were very sanguine of success. They conceived that Mr. Block's figures had completely cowed their antagonists.

Mr. Vigil then took his case in hand, and brought forward his witnesses. It now appeared that the intercourse between the people living on each side of the river was immense, and ever on the increase. Limehouse, it would seem, had nothing to do but to go to Deptford, and that Deptford

consumed all its time in returning the visit. Little children were sent across continually on the most trifling errands, going and coming for one halfpenny. An immense income was made by the owners of the ferry. No two adjacent streets in London had more to do with each other than had the lanes of Rotherhithe and the lanes of Limehouse. Westminster and Lambeth were further apart, and less connected by friendly intercourse. The frequenters of the ferry were found to outnumber the passengers over Waterloo Bridge by ten to one.

Indeed, so lamentable a proposition as this of building a bridge across the river had never before been mooted by the public. Men conversant with such matters, gave it as their opinion that no amount of tolls that could reasonably be expected would pay one per cent. on the money which it was proposed to expend; that sum, however, they stated, would not more than half cover the full cost of the bridge. Traffic would be prohibited by the heavy charges which would be necessary, and the probability would be that the ferry would still continue to be the ordinary mode of crossing the river.

A gentleman, accustomed to use strong figures of speech, declared that if such a bridge were built, the wisest course would be to sow the surface with grass, and let it out for grazing. This witness was taken specially in hand by Mr. Nogo, and targed very tightly. Mr. Vigil had

contrived to prove, out of the mouths of inimical witnesses, the very reverse of that which they had been summoned thither to assert. The secret of the ferry had been first brought to the light by the gentleman who could not visit his daughter at Deptford, and so on. These triumphs had evidently been very pleasant to Mr. Vigil, and Mr. Nogo thought that he might judiciously take a leaf out of the treasury book. Actuated by this ambition, he, with the assistance of his friend the M'Carthy Desmond, put no less than 2250 questions to the gentleman who suggested the grazing, in order to induce him to say, that if there were a bridge, men would probably walk over it. But they could not bring him to own to a single passenger, unless they would abandon the tolls. The most that they could get from him was, that perhaps an old woman, with more money than wit, might go over it on a Sunday afternoon, if—which he did not believe—any old woman existed, *in that part of the world*, who had more money than wit.

This witness was kept in the chair for three days, during which Mr. Vigil was nearly driven wild by the loss of his valuable time. But he did not complain. Nor would he have complained, though he might have absented himself, had the witness been kept in the chair three weeks instead of three days. The expense of the committee, including witnesses, short-hand writers,

and printing, was about 60% a day, but it never occurred to any one of the number to get up and declare with indignation, that such a waste of money and time on so palpably absurd a scheme was degrading, and to demand an immediate close of their labours. It all went smoothly to the end, and Mr. Nogo walked off from his task with the approving conscience of a patriotic legislator.

At the close the members met to prepare their report. It was then the first week in August, and they were naturally in a hurry to finish their work. It was now their duty to decide on the merits of what they had heard, to form a judgment as to the veracity of the witnesses, and declare, on behalf of the country which they represented, whether or no this bridge should be built at the expense of the nation.

With his decision each was ready enough; but not one of them dreamed of being influenced by anything which had been said before them. All the world—that is, all that were in any way concerned in the matter—knew that the witnesses for the bridge were anxious to have it built, and that the witnesses against the bridge were anxious to prevent the building. It would be the worst of ignorance, ignorance of the usage of the world we live in, to suppose that any member of Parliament could be influenced by such manœuvres. Besides, was not the mind of each man fully known before the committee met?

Various propositions were made by the members among themselves, and various amendments moved. The balance of the different parties had been nearly preserved. A decided victory was not to be expected on either side. At last the resolution to which the committee came was this:—"That this committee is not prepared, under existing circumstances, to recommend a grant of public money for the purpose of erecting a bridge at Limehouse; but that the committee consider that the matter is still open to consideration should further evidence be adduced."

Mr. Vigil was perfectly satisfied. He did not wish to acerbate the member for Mile End, and was quite willing to give him a lift towards keeping his seat for the borough, if able to do so without cost to the public exchequer. At Limehouse, the report of the committee was declared by certain persons to be as good as a decision in their favour; it was only postponing the matter for another session. But Mr. Vigil knew that he had carried his point, and the world soon agreed with him. He at least did his work successfully, and, considering the circumstances of his position, he did it with credit to himself.

A huge blue volume was then published, containing, among other things, all Mr. Nogo's 2250 questions and their answers; and so the Limehouse and Rotherhithe bridge dropped into oblivion and was forgotten.

CHAPTER IV.

TO STAND, OR NOT TO STAND.

SIR GREGORY HARDLINES had been somewhat startled by Alaric's announcement of his parliamentary intentions. It not unnaturally occurred to that great man that should Mr. Tudor succeed at Strathbogy, and should he also succeed in being allowed to hold his office and seat together, he, Tudor, would very soon become first fiddle at the Civil Service Examination Board. This was a view of the matter which was by no means agreeable to Sir Gregory. Not for this had he devoted his time, his energy, and the best powers of his mind to the office of which he was at present the chief; not for this had he taken by the hand a young clerk, and brought him forward, and pushed him up, and seated him in high places. To have kept Mr. Jobbles would have been better than this; he, at any rate, would not have aspired to parliamentary honours.

And when Sir Gregory came to look into it, he hardly knew whether those bugbears with which he had tried to frighten Tudor were good serviceable bugbears, such as would stand the strain of such a man's logic and reason. Was there really any reason why one of the commis-

sioners should not sit in Parliament? Would his doing so be subversive of the constitution? Or would the minister of the day object to an additional certain vote? This last point of view was one in which it did not at all delight Sir Gregory to look at the subject in question. He determined that he would not speak on the matter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or to any of the government wigs who might be considered to be bigger wigs than himself. Why should he fight Tudor's battles for him, or put his own head into the lion's mouth? After Alaric left him he thought over the matter coolly with himself, and resolved that he would employ all the force of his eloquence—and how great was that?—and all the weight of his own authority—and how overpowering was that?—in inducing his junior colleague to abandon his mad ambition.

And Alaric thought over the matter coolly also. He looked at it till the bugbears shrank into utter insignificance; till they became no more than forms of shreds and patches put up to frighten birds out of cherry-orchards. Why should the constitution be wounded by the presence of one more commissioner in Parliament? Why should not he do his public duty and hold his seat at the same time, as was done by so many others? But he would have to go out if the ministry went out. That was another difficulty, another bugbear, more substantial perhaps than

the others ; but he was prepared to meet even that. He was a poor man ; his profession was that of the Civil Service ; his ambition was to sit in Parliament. He would see whether he could not combine his poverty with his profession, and with his ambition also. Sir Gregory resolved in his fear that he would not speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the matter ; Alaric, on the other hand, in his audacity, resolved that he would do so.

The two commissioners were in the habit of meeting daily, and much confidential intercourse they had in Sir Gregory's private room. Things had changed much with both of them since Sir Gregory had been chief clerk and Alaric Tudor junior clerk at the Weights and Measures ; much with both of them, but by far the most wonderfully with Alaric. He was still a young man, hardly yet thirty, but he had already got greatly beyond the top of his own office, and was already talked of as a name of note in bureaucratic circles. He had achieved all this already ; and now, with unappeasable ambition, he was striving to push Sir Gregory from his throne !

It was thus at least that Sir Gregory himself regarded the matter. " See all that I have done for this man," said he to himself ; " see how I have warmed him in my bosom, how I have lifted him to fortune and renown, how I have heaped benefits on his head ! If gratitude in this world be possible, that man should be grate-

ful to me ; if one man can ever have another's interest at heart, that man should have a heartfelt anxiety as to my interest. And yet how is it ? I have placed him in the chair next to my own, and now he is desirous of sitting above me !”

And then Sir Gregory, with the bitter platitudes so common to men when they think of such matters, groaned over the world's ingratitude.

'Twas thus Sir Gregory communed with himself. But Alaric's soliloquy was very different. A listener who could have overheard both would hardly have thought that the same question was being discussed by the two. “I have got so high,” said Alaric, “by my own labour, by my own skill and tact ; and why should I stop here ? I have left my earliest colleagues far behind me, have distanced those who were my competitors in the walk of life ; why should I not still go on and distance others also ? why stop when I am only second or third ? It is very natural that Sir Gregory should wish to keep me out of Parliament ; I cannot in the least blame him ; let us all fight as best each may for himself. He does not wish a higher career ; I do. Sir Gregory will now do all that he can to impede my views, because they are antagonistic of his own ; very well ; I must only work the harder to overcome his objections.” There was no word in all this of gratitude ; there was no thought in Alaric's mind that it behoved him to be grateful to Sir

Gregory. It was for his own sake, not for his pupil's, that Sir Gregory had brought this pupil forward. Grateful, indeed! In public life when is there time for gratitude? Who ever thinks of other interest than his own?

Such was Alaric's theory of life. But not the less would he have expected gratitude from those whom he might serve. Such also very probably was Sir Gregory's theory when he thought of those who had helped him, instead of those whom he himself had helped.

And so they met, and discussed Alaric's little proposition.

"Since I saw you yesterday," said Sir Gregory, "I have been thinking much, indeed very much, of what you were saying to me of your wish to go into Parliament."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Alaric.

"I need hardly tell you, Tudor, how anxious I am to further your advancement. I greatly value your ability and diligence, and have shown that I am anxious to make them serviceable to the public."

"I am fully aware that I owe you a great deal, Sir Gregory."

"Oh, I don't mean that; that's nothing; I am not thinking of myself. I only want you to understand that I am truly anxious to see you take that line in public matters which may make your services most valuable to the public, and which may redound the most to your own ad-

vantage. I have thought of what you said to me with the most mature deliberation, and I am persuaded that I shall best do my duty to you, and to the service, by recommending you to abandon altogether your idea of going into Parliament."

Sir Gregory said this in his weightiest manner. He endeavoured to assume some of that authority with which he had erst cowed the young Tudor at the Weights and Measures, and as he finished his speech he assumed a profound look which ought to have been very convincing. He then rubbed his hands over each other, and leaned back in his arm-chair to watch the effects of his spoken wisdom.

But the time was gone by with Alaric when such tricks of legerdemain were convincing to him. A grave brow, compressed lips, and fixed eyes, had no longer much effect upon him. He had a point to gain, and he was thinking of that and not of Sir Gregory's grimaces.

"Then you will not see the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject?"

"No," said Sir Gregory; "it would be useless for me to do so. I could not advocate such a scheme, feeling certain that it would be injurious both to yourself and to the service; and I would not desire to see the Chancellor with the view of opposing your wishes."

"I am much obliged to you for that, at any rate," said Alaric.

“But I do hope that you will not carry your plan any further. When I tell you, as I do with the utmost sincerity, that I feel certain that an attempt to seat yourself in Parliament can only lead to the ruin of your prospects as a Civil servant, prospects which are brighter now than those of any other young man in the service, I cannot but think that you must hesitate before you take any step which will be irrecoverable. If you once publish an address to a constituency, that step will be irrecoverable. Indeed I think that you cannot do so without previously resigning.”

“I shall be sorry to resign, Sir Gregory, as I have such true pleasure in serving with you.”

“And I presume a salary of 1200*l.* a year is not unacceptable,” said Sir Gregory, with the very faintest of smiles.

“By no means,” said Alaric; “I am a poor man, depending altogether on my own exertions for an income. I cannot afford to throw away a chance.”

“Then take my word for it you should give up all idea of Parliament,” said Sir Gregory, who thought that he had carried his point.

“But I call a seat in Parliament a chance,” said Alaric; “the best chance that a man circumstanced as I am can possibly have. I have the offer of a seat, Sir Gregory, and I can’t afford to throw it away. Indeed I am already pledged to the electors of Strathbogy.”

"Then it is my duty to tell you, as the head of your office, that it will be your duty to resign before you offer yourself as a candidate."

"That you mean is your present opinion, Sir Gregory."

"Yes, Mr. Tudor, that is my opinion. An opinion which I shall be forced to express to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if you persist in this infatuation."

Alaric looked very grave, but not a whit angry. "I am sorry for it, Sir Gregory, very sorry; I had hoped to have had your countenance."

"I would give it you, Mr. Tudor, if I could consistently with my duty as a public servant; but as I cannot, I am sure you will not ask for it." How Fidus Neverbend would have admired the chief commissioner could he have seen and heard him at this moment! "But," he continued, relaxing for awhile the muscles of his face, "I hope, I do hope, you will think better of this. What are you to gain? Come, Tudor, think of it that way. What are you to gain? You, with a wife and young family coming up about your heels, what are you to gain by going into Parliament? That is what I ask you. What are you to gain?" It was delightful to see how pleasantly practical Sir Gregory could become when he chose to dismount from his high horse.

"It is considered a high position in this country, that of a member of Parliament," said

Alaric. "A man in gaining that is generally supposed to have gained something."

"True, quite true. It is a desirable position for a rich man, or a rich man's eldest son; or even for a poor man, if by getting into Parliament he can put himself in the way of improving his income. But, my dear Tudor, you are in none of these positions. You are not a rich man, nor are you an heir to wealth; nor yet are you in search of a profession by which you may live. You have got that for which so many others are seeking. You have made your way to the top of your profession. And now you are going to begin again, and all for the vain honour, or for the chance of the vain honour, of sitting in Parliament! Abandon the idea, my dear Tudor; pray abandon it. If not for your own sake, at any rate do so for that of your wife and child."

Sir Gregory might as well have whistled. Not a word that he said had the slightest effect on Alaric. How was it possible that his words should have any effect, seeing that Alaric was convinced that Sir Gregory was pleading for his own advantage, and not for that of his listener. Alaric did listen. He received all that Sir Gregory said with the most profound attention; schooled his face into a look of the most polite deference, and then, with his most cruel tone, informed Sir Gregory that his mind was quite made up, that he did intend to submit himself to the electors of Strathbogy.

“And as to what you say about my seat at the board, Sir Gregory, you may probably be right. Perhaps it will be as well that I should see the Chancellor of the Exchequer myself.”

“Who will to Cupar maun to Cupar,” said Sir Gregory; “I can only say, Mr. Tudor, that I am very sorry for you, and very sorry for your wife, very sorry, very sorry indeed.”

“And who will to Strathbogy maun to Strathbogy,” said Alaric laughing; there is certainly an air of truth about the proverb as applied to myself just at present. But the fact is, whether for good or for bad, I maun to Strathbogy. That is my present destiny. As to that I have made up my mind. You may easily conceive that I also have given the matter my most mature consideration. The fact that I have a wife and a child does make the step a most momentous one. But, Sir Gregory, I should never forgive myself were I to throw away such an opportunity. Of course there is much risk in what I am now doing; but my wife is of the same temperament as myself, and she is prepared to run the risk.”

“Then I have nothing more to say, Mr. Tudor.”

“Of course I shall try to save my place,” continued Alaric.

“I look upon that as quite impossible,” said Sir Gregory.

“It can do me no harm at any rate to see the

Chancellor of the Exchequer. If he tells me that a seat in Parliament and a seat at the board are incompatible, and that as one of the Civil Service Commissioners I am not free to stand for the borough, I will in that case, Sir Gregory, put my resignation in your hands before I publish my address."

And so they parted, each determined to do all that in him lay to thwart the wishes of the other. Alaric was not in the least influenced by anything that Sir Gregory had said to him; he had made up his mind, and was determined to be turned from it by no arguments that his colleague could use; but nevertheless he could not but be meditative, as, walking home across the parks, he thought of his wife and child. It is true that he had a second trade; he was a stock-jobber as well as a Civil Service Commissioner; but he already perceived how very difficult it was to realize an income to which he could trust from that second precarious pursuit. He had, it is true, made money by it, in the long run; he had begun with nothing, and now held property, which he believed to be worth much more than the capital belonging to his ward, which he had surreptitiously borrowed. He had also lived in a style considerably beyond that which his official income would have enabled him to assume. He had on the whole, he thought, done very well; but yet it would be a dreadful thing to have to trust to so precarious a livelihood. He had

realized nothing; he had not yet been able to pay back the money which he had so fraudulently taken, and to acquit himself of a debt which now lay daily heavier and heavier on his soul. He felt that he must repay not only that but Undy's share also, before he could again pass a happy day or a quiet night. This plan of throwing up 1200*l.* a year would badly assist him in getting rid of this incubus.

But still that watchword of his goaded him on—'Excelsior!' he still said to himself; 'excelsior!' If he halted now, now when the ball was at his foot, he might never have another chance. He had begun to play a great game, and how mad would he be to stop now, while he was winning. Very early in life, before a beard was on his chin, before he could style himself a man according to the laws of his country, he had determined within himself that a seat in Parliament was the only fitting ambition for an Englishman. That was now within his reach. Would he be such a dastard as to draw back his hand, and be deterred from taking it, by old women's tales of prudence, and the self-interested lectures of Sir Gregory Hardlines?

Excelsior! There was not much that could be so styled in that debt of his to M. and Madame Jaquêtènàpe. If he could only pay that off he felt that he could brave the world without a fear. Come what come might he would sell out and do so. The bridge committee was sitting and

his shares were already worth more than he had paid for them. Mr. Blocks had just given his evidence, and the commercial world was willing enough to invest in the Limehouse bridge. He would sell out and put his conscience at rest.

But then to do so successfully, he must induce Undy to do so too ; and that he knew would not at present be an easy task. Who had ever been successful in getting back money from Undy Scott ? He had paid the last half-year's interest with most commendable punctuality, and was not that a great deal from Undy Scott ?

Moreover, if Alaric were to push for the money and make himself disagreeable, where would be his seat for Strathbogy ? And was it not the fact that this loan of his ward's money was the price he had paid for the use of the Gaberlunzie interest ? Could he reasonably be expected to enjoy the property he had purchased, if he insisted on withdrawing the purchase-money ? No ; he must repay the whole of the 10,000*l.* himself, and then make the best he could of Undy's debt to him.

But what if this appropriation of another's money, what if this fraud should be detected and exposed before he had succeeded in paying back 10,000*l.* ! What if he should wake some morning and find himself in the grip of some Newgate myrmidon. A terrible new law had just been passed for the protection of trust property ; a law in which he had not felt the slightest interest when he had first seen in the

daily newspapers some tedious account of the passing of the various clauses; but which was now terrible to his innermost thoughts.

His walk across the parks was not made happy by much self-triumph. In spite of his commissionership and coming parliamentary honours his solitary moments were seldom very happy. It was at his club when living with Undy and Undy's peers, that he was best able to throw off his cares and enjoy himself. But even then, high as he was mounted on his fast trotting horse, black care would sit behind him, ever mounted on the same steed.

And bitterly did poor Gertrude feel the misery of these evenings which her husband passed at his club; but she never reviled him or complained; she never spoke of her sorrow even to her mother or sister. She did not even blame him in her own heart. She knew that he had other business than that of his office, higher hopes than those attached to his board; and she taught herself to believe that his career required him to be among public men. She fully sympathized with his ambition, and was truly happy when he spoke to her of his high intentions.

He had endeavoured to induce her to associate constantly with Mrs. Val, so that her evenings might not be passed alone; but Gertrude, after trying Mrs. Val for a time, had quietly repudiated the closeness of this alliance. Mrs. Val had her ideas of excelsior, her ambition to rule, and these

ideas and this ambition did not at all suit Gertrude's temper. Not even for her husband's sake could she bring herself to be patronised by Mrs. Val. They were still very dear friends, of course ; but they did not live in each other's arms as Alaric had intended they should do.

He returned home after his interview with Sir Gregory, and found his wife in the drawing-room with her child. He usually went down from his office to his club, and she was therefore the more ready to welcome him for having broken through his habit on the present occasion. She left her infant sprawling on the floor, and came up to greet him with a kiss.

"Ger"—said he, putting his arm round her and embracing her—"I have come home to consult you on business;" and then he seated himself on the sofa taking her with him, still in his arms. There was but little doubt that she would consent to anything which he could propose to her after such a fashion, in such a guise as this; that he knew full well.

"Well, love," said she, "and what is the business about? you know that I always think that to be best which you think to be best."

"Yes, Ger; but this is a very important matter;" and then he looked grave, but managed at the same time to look happy and contented. This is a matter of vital importance to you, and I will do nothing in it without your consent."

“What is best for you, must be best for me;” said Gertrude, kissing his forehead.

Then he explained to her what had passed between himself and Sir Gregory, and what his own ideas were as regarded the borough of Strathbogy. “Sir Gregory,” said he, “is determined that I shall not remain at the board and sit in Parliament at the same time; but I do not see why Sir Gregory is to have his own way in everything. If you are not afraid of the risk I will make up my mind to stand it at all events, and to resign if the Minister makes it imperative. If, however, you fear the result, I will let the matter drop, and tell the Scotts to find another candidate. I am anxious to go into Parliament, I confess; but I will never do so at the expense of your peace of mind.”

The way in which he put upon her the whole weight of the decision was not generous. Nor was the mode he adopted of inducing her to back his own wishes. If there were risk to her—and in truth there was fearful risk—it was his duty to guard her from the chance, not hers to say whether such danger should be encountered or no. The nature of her answer may be easily surmised. She was generous, though he was not. She would never retard his advance, or be felt as a millstone round his neck. She encouraged him with all her enthusiasm, and bade him throw prudence to the winds. If he rose, must she

not rise also? Whatever step in life was good for him, must it not be good for her as well? And so that matter was settled between them—pleasantly enough.

He endured a fortnight of considerable excitement, during which he and Sir Gregory did not smile at each other, and then he saw the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That gentleman promised to speak to the Prime Minister, feeling himself unable to answer the question put to him, definitely out of his own head; and then another fortnight passed on. At the end of that time the Chancellor of the Exchequer sent for Alaric, and they had a second interview.

“Well, Mr. Tudor,” said the great man, “this is a matter of very considerable importance, and one on which I am not even yet prepared to give you a positive answer.”

This was very good news for Alaric. Sir Gregory had spoken of the matter as one on which there could be no possible doubt. He had asserted that the British lion would no longer sleep peaceably in his lair, if such a violence were put on the constitution as that meditated by the young commissioner. It was quite clear that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Prime Minister also, looked at it in a very different light. They doubted, and Alaric was well aware that their doubt was as good as certainty to him.

The truth was that the Prime Minister had said to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a half

serious, half jocular way, that he didn't see why he should reject a vote when offered to him by a member of the Civil Service. The man must of course do his work—and should it be found that his office work and his seat in Parliament interfered with each other, why, he must take the consequences. And if —— or —— or —— made a row about it in the House and complained, why in that case also Mr. Tudor must take the consequences. And then, enough having been said on that matter, the conversation dropped.

“I am not prepared to give a positive answer,” said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who of course did not choose to commit himself.

Alaric assured the great man that he was not so unreasonable as to expect a positive answer. Positive answers, as he well knew, were not often forthcoming among official men; official men, as he had already learnt, prefer to do their business by answers which are not positive. He himself had become averse to positive answers since he had become a commissioner, and was quite prepared to dispense with them in the parliamentary career which he hoped that he was now about to commence. This much, however, was quite clear, that he might offer himself as a candidate to the electors of Strathbogy without resigning; and that Sir Gregory's hostile remonstrance on the subject, should he choose to make one, would not be received as absolute law by the greater powers.

Accordingly as Alaric was elated Sir Gregory

was depressed. He had risen high, but now this young tyro whom he had fostered was about to climb above his head. Oh the ingratitude of men !

Alaric, however, showed no triumph. He was more submissive, more gracious than ever to his chief. It was only to himself that he muttered "Excelsior !"

CHAPTER V.

WESTMINSTER HALL.

THE parliamentary committee pursued their animated inquiries respecting the Limehouse bridge all through the sultry month of July. How Mr. Vigil must have hated Mr. Nogo, and the M^cCarthy Desmond! how sick he must have got of that eternal witness who, with imperturbable effrontery, answered the 2250 questions put to him without admitting anything! To Mr. Vigil it was all mere nonsense, sheer waste of time. Had he been condemned to sit for eight days in close contiguity to the clappers of a small mill, he would have learnt as much as he did from the witnesses, before the committee. Nevertheless he went through it and did not lose his temper. He smiled sweetly on Mr. Nogo every morning, and greeted the titled Irishman with his easy familiar nod, as though the continued sitting of this very committee was of all things to him the most desirable. Such is Mr. Vigil's peculiar tact, such his special talent; these are the gifts—gifts by no means ordinary—which have made him Right Honourable, and recommended him to the confidence of successive badgers.

But though the committee was uninteresting to Mr. Vigil, it was not so to the speculative inhabitants of Limehouse, or to the credulous

shopkeepers of Rotherhithe. On the evening of the day on which Mr. Blocks was examined, the shares went up 20 per cent.; and when his evidence was published *in extenso* the next Saturday morning by the Capel Court Share-buyer, a periodical which served for bible and prayer book, as well as a compendium of the whole duty of man, to Undy Scott and his friends, a further rise in the price of this valuable property was the immediate consequence.

Now, then, was the time for Alaric to sell and get out of his difficulties if ever he could do so. Shares which he had bought for 30s. were now worth nearly 2*l.* 10s. He was strongly of opinion that they would fall again, and that the final result of the committee would leave them of a less value than their original purchase-money, and probably altogether valueless. He could not, however, act in the matter without consulting Undy, so closely linked were they in the speculation; and even at the present price his own shares would not enable him to pay back the full amount of what he had taken.

The joint property of the two was, however, at its present market price worth 12,000*l.*—10,000*l.* would make him a free man. He was perfectly willing to let Undy have the full use of the difference in amount; nay, he was ready enough to give it to him altogether, if by so doing he could place the whole of his ward's money once more in safety. With the power of offering such a

douceur to his friend's rapacity, he flattered himself that he might have a chance of being successful. He therefore prepared himself to discuss the matter with his partner.

It so happened that at the same moment Undy was desirous of discussing the same subject, their joint interest, namely, in the Limehouse bridge; there was no difficulty therefore in their coming together. They met at the door of the committee-room when Mr. Nogo had just put his 999th question to the adverse witness; and as the summons to prayers prevented the 1000th being proceeded with at that moment, Undy and Alaric sauntered back along the passages, and then walking up and down the immense space of Westminster Hall, said each to the other what he had to say on the matter mooted between them.

Undy was in great glee, and seemed to look on his fortune as already made. They had at first confined their remarks to the special evidence of the witness who had last been in the chair; and Undy, with the volubility which was common to him when he was in high spirits, had been denouncing him as an ass who was injuring his own cause by his over obstinacy.

"Nothing that he can say," said Undy, "will tell upon the share-market. The stock is rising from hour to hour; and Piles himself told me that he knew from sure intelligence that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is prepared to give

way, whatever Vigil may say to the contrary. "Their firm," Piles says, "are buying every share they can lay their hands on."

"Then in God's name let them buy ours," said Alaric.

"Buy ours!" said Undy. "You don't mean to tell me that you wish to sell now! You don't mean to say that you want to back out, now that the game is all going our own way!"

"Indeed I do, and I intend to do so; just listen to me, Undy ——"

"I tell you fairly, Tudor, I will not sell a share; what you may choose to do with your own I cannot say. But if you will be guided by me you will keep every share you have got. Instead of selling we should both add to our stock. I at any rate am resolved to do so."

"Listen to me, Undy," said Alaric.

"The truth is," said Undy—who at the present moment preferred talking to listening — "the truth is, you do not understand buying and selling shares. We should both be ruined very quickly were I to allow myself to be led by you; you are too timid, too much afraid of risking your money; your speculative pluck hardly rises higher than the three per cents., and never soars above a first-class mortgage on land.

"I could be as sanguine as you are, and as bold," said Alaric, "were I venturing with my own money."

"In the name of goodness get that bugbear out

of your head," said Undy. "Whatever good it might have done you to think of that sometime ago, it can do you no good now." There was a bitter truth in this which made Alaric's heart sink low within his breast. "Wherever the money came from, whose property it may have been or be, it has been used; and now your only safety is in making the best use of it. A little daring, a little audacity—it is that which ruins men. When you sit down to play brag, you must brag it out, or lose your money."

"But, my dear fellow, there is no question here of losing money. If we sell now we shall realize about 2000%."

"And will that, or the half of that satisfy you? Is that your idea of a good thing? Will that be sufficient to pay for the dozen of bad things which a fellow is always putting his foot into? It won't satisfy me. I can tell you that, at any rate."

Alaric felt very desirous of keeping Undy in a good humour. He wished, if possible, to persuade him rather than to drive him; to coax him into repaying this money, and not absolutely to demand the repayment. "Come," said he, "what do you call a good thing, yourself?"

"I call cent. per cent. a good thing, and I'll not sell a share till they come up to that."

"They'll never do that, Undy."

"That's your opinion. I think differently. And I'm sure you will own I have had more

experience of the share-market than you have. When I see such men as Blocks and Piles buying fast, I know very well which way the wind blows. A man may be fishing a long time, Tudor, in these waters, before he gets such a haul as this; but he must be a great fool to let go his net when he does get it."

They both then remained silent for a time, for each was doubtful how best to put forward the view which he himself wished to urge. Their projects were diametrically different, and yet neither could carry his own without the assistance of the other.

"I tell you what I propose," said Undy.

"Wait a moment, Undy," said Alaric; "listen to me for one moment. I can hear nothing till you do so, and then I will hear anything."

"Well, what is it?"

"We have each of us put something near to 5000*l.* into this venture."

"I have put more," said Scott.

"Very well. But we have each of us withdrawn a sum equal to that I have named from my ward's fortune for this purpose."

"I deny that;" said Undy. "I have taken nothing from your ward's fortune. I have had no power to do so. You have done as you pleased with that fortune. But I am ready to admit that I have borrowed 5000*l.*;—not from your ward, but from you."

Alaric was nearly beside himself; but he still

felt that he should have no chance of carrying his point if he lost his temper.

"That is ungenerous of you, Scott, to say the least of it; but we'll let that pass. To enable me to lend you the 5000*l.*, and to enable me to join you in this speculation, 10,000*l.* has been withdrawn from Clementina's fortune."

"I know nothing about that," said Scott.

"Know nothing about it!" said Alaric, looking at him with withering scorn. But Undy was not made of withering material, and did not care a straw for his friend's scorn.

"Nothing whatever," said he.

"Well, so be it," said Alaric; "but the fact is, the money has been withdrawn."

"I don't doubt that in the least," said Undy.

"I am not now going to argue whether the fault has been most mine or yours," continued Alaric.

"Well, that is kind of you," said Undy, "considering that you are the girl's trustee, and that I have no more to do with it than that fellow in the wig there."

"I wish at any rate you would let me explain myself," said Alaric, who felt that his patience was fast going, and who could hardly resist the temptation of seizing his companion by the throat, and punishing him on the spot for his iniquity.

"I don't prevent you, my dear fellow—only remember this; I will not permit you to assert,

without contradicting you, that I am responsible for Clem's fortune. Now go on, and explain away as hard as you like."

Alaric, under these circumstances, found it not very easy to put what he had to say into any words that his companion would admit. He fully intended at some future day to thrust Scott's innocence down his throat, and tell him that he was not only a thief, but a mean, lying, beggarly thief. But the present was not the time. Too much depended on his inducing Undy to act with him.

"Ten thousand pounds has at any rate been taken."

"That I won't deny."

"And half that sum has been lent to you."

"I acknowledge a debt of 5000*l*."

"It is imperative that 10,000*l*. should at once be repaid."

"I have no objection in life."

"I can sell my shares in the Limehouse bridge," continued Alaric, "for 6000*l*., and I am prepared to do so."

"The more fool you," said Undy, "if you do it; especially as 6000*l*. won't pay 10,000*l*., and as the same property, if overheld another month or two, in all probability will do so."

"I am ready to sacrifice that and more than that," said Alaric. "If you will sell out 4000*l*., and let me at once have that amount, so as to make up the full sum I owe, I will make you a

free present of the remainder of the debt. Come, Undy, you cannot but call that a good thing. You will have pocketed two thousand pounds, according to the present market value of the shares, and that without the slightest risk."

Undy for a while seemed staggered by the offer. Whether it was Alaric's extreme simplicity in making it, or his own good luck in receiving it, or whether by any possible chance some all but dormant remnant of feeling within his heart was touched, we will not pretend to say. But for a while he walked on silent, as though wavering in his resolution, and looking as if he wished to be somewhat more civil, somewhat less of the bully, than he had been.

There was no one else to whom Alaric could dare to open his heart on this subject of his ward's fortune; there was none other but this ally of his to whom he could confide, whom he could consult. Unpromising, therefore, though Undy was as a confederate, Alaric, when he thought he saw this change in his manner, poured forth at once the full tide of his feelings.

"Undy," said he, "pray bear with me awhile. The truth is I cannot endure this misery any longer. I do not now want to blame any one but myself. The thing has been done, and it is useless now to talk of blame. The thing has been done, and all that now remains for me is to undo it; to put this girl's money back again, and get this horrid weight from off my breast."

“Upon my word, my dear fellow, I did not think that you took it in such a light as that,” said Undy.

“I am miserable about it,” said Alaric. “It keeps me awake all night and destroys all my energy during the day.”

“Oh, that’s all bile,” said Undy. “You should give up fish for a few days and take a blue pill at night.”

“Scott, this money must be paid back at once, or I shall lose my senses. Fortune has so far favoured me as to enable me to put my hand at once on the larger portion of it. You must let me have the remainder. In God’s name say that you will do so.”

Undy Scott unfortunately had not the power to do as he was asked. Whether he would have done so, had he had the power, need not now be inquired. He was somewhat gravelled for an answer to Alaric’s earnest supplication, and therefore made none till the request was repeated. “In God’s name let me have this money,” repeated Alaric. “You will then have made two thousand pounds by the transaction.”

“My dear Tudor,” said he, “your stomach is out of order. I can see it as well as possible from the way you talk.”

Here was an answer for a man to get to the most earnest appeal which he could make! Here was comfort for a wretch suffering from fear, remorse, and shame, as Alaric was suffering. He

had spoken of his feelings and his heart; but these were regions quite out of Undy Scott's cognizance. "Take a blue pill," said he, "and you'll be as right as a trivet in a couple of days."

What was Alaric to say? What could he say to a man who at such a crisis could talk to him of blue pills? For a while he said nothing; but the form of his face changed, a darkness came over his brow which Scott had never before seen there, the colour flew from his face, his eyes sparkled, and a strange appearance of resolute defiance showed itself round his mouth. Scott began to perceive that his medical advice would not be taken in good part.

"Scott," said he, stopping short in his walk and taking hold of the collar of his companion's coat, not loosely by the button, but with a firm grip which Undy felt that it would be difficult to shake off—"Scott, you will find that I am not to be trifled with. You have made a villain of me. I can see no way to escape from my ruin, without your aid; but by the living God, if I fall, you shall fall with me. Tell me now; will you let me have this sum I demand? If you do not, I will go to your brother's wife and tell her what has become of her daughter's money."

"You may go to the devil's wife if you like it," said Undy, "and tell her whatever you please."

"You refuse then," said Alaric, still keeping hold of Undy's coat.

“Come, take your hand off,” said Undy. “You will make me think your head is wrong as well as your stomach, if you go on like this. Take your hand off and listen to me. I will then explain to you why I cannot do what you would have me. Take your hand away, I say; do you not see that people are looking at us.”

They were now standing at the upper end of the hall—close under the steps which led to the upper parts of the Houses of Parliament; and, as Undy said, the place was too public for a display of physical resentment. Alaric took his hand away. “Well,” said he, “now tell me what is to hinder you from letting me have the money you owe me?”

“Only this,” said Undy; “that every share I have in the concern is made over, by way of security, to old M^cCleury, and he now holds them. Till I have redeemed them, I have no power of selling.”

Alaric, when he heard these words, could hardly prevent himself from falling in the middle of the hall. All his hopes were then over; he had no chance of shaking this intolerable burden from his shoulders; he had taken the woman’s money, this money which had been intrusted to his honour and safe keeping, and thrown it into a bottomless gulf.

“And now listen to me,” said Undy, looking at his watch. “I must be in the House in ten or fifteen minutes, for this bill about married

women is on, and I am interested in it; listen to me now for five minutes. All this that you have been saying is sheer nonsense."

"I think you'll find that it is not all nonsense," said Alaric.

"Oh, I am not in the least afraid of your doing anything rash. You'll be cautious enough I know when you come to be cool; especially if you take a little physic. What I want to say is this—Clem's money is safe enough. I tell you these bridge shares will go on rising till the beginning of next session. Instead of selling, what we should do is to buy up six or seven thousand pounds more."

"What, with Clementina's money?"

"It's as well to be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Besides your doing so is your only safety. My brother Val insists upon having 250 shares."

"Your brother Val!" said Alaric.

"Yes; Val; and why shouldn't he? I would give them to him if I could, but I can't. M^cCleury, as I tell you, has every share of mine in his possession."

"Your brother Val wants 250 shares! And does he expect me to give them to him?"

"Well—I rather think he does. That is, not to give them, of course; you don't suppose he wants you to make him a present of money. But he wants you to accommodate him with the price of them. You can either do that, or let him have so many of your own; it will be as

broad as it is long; and he'll give you his note of hand for the amount."

Now it was well known among the acquaintance of the Scott family, that the note of hand of the Honourable Captain Val was not worth the paper on which it was written.

Alaric was so astonished at this monstrous request, coming as it did after such a conversation, that he did not well know how to take it.

Was Undy mad, or was he in joke? What man in his senses would think of lending six or seven hundred pounds to Val Scott! "I suppose you are in jest," said he, somewhat bitterly.

"I never was more in earnest in my life," said Undy. "I'll just explain how the matter is; and as you are sharp enough, you'll see at once that you had better oblige him. Val, you know, is always hard up; he can't touch a shilling of that woman's money, and just at present he has none of his own. So he came to me this morning to raise the wind."

"And you are kind enough to pass him on to me."

"Listen a moment. I did not do anything of the kind. I never lend money to Val. It's a principle with me not to do so, and he knows it."

"Then just tell him that my principles in this respect are identical with your own."

"That's all very well; and you may tell him so yourself, if you like it; but hear first of all

what his arguments are. Of course, I told him I could do nothing for him. 'But,' said he, 'you can get Tudor to do it.' I told him, of course, that I could do nothing of the kind. 'Oh!' said Val, 'I know the game you are both playing. I know all about Clem's money.' Val, you know, never says much. He was playing pool at the time, at the club; but he came back after his stroke, and whispered to me—'You and Tudor, between you, must let me have 250 of those shares, and then it'll be all right.' Now, Val, you know, is a most determined fellow."

Alaric, when he heard this, looked up into his companion's face to see whether he was talking to the Evil one himself. Oh, what a net of ruin was closing round him!—How inextricable were the toils into which he had fallen!

"After all," continued Undy, "what he asks is not much, and I really think you should do it for him. He is quite willing to give you his assistance at Strathbogy, and he is entitled to some accommodation."

"Some accommodation!" repeated Alaric, almost lost in the consideration of his own misery.

"Yes; I really think he is. And, Tudor, you may be sure of this, you know; you will be quite safe with him. Val is the very soul of honour. Do this for him, and you'll hear no more about it. You may be quite sure that he'll ask for nothing further, and that he'll never

say a word to annoy you. He's devilish honourable is Val; no man can be more so; though, perhaps, you wouldn't think it."

"Devilish honourable," said Alaric. "Only he would like to have a bribe."

"A bribe!" said Scott. "Come, my dear fellow, don't you make an ass of yourself. Val is like the rest of us; when money is going, he likes to have a share of it. If you come to that every man who is paid either for talking or for not talking is bribed."

"I don't know that I ever heard of a much clearer case of a bribe than this which you now demand for your brother."

"Bribe or no bribe," said Undy, looking at his watch, "I strongly advise you to do for him what he asks; it will be better for all of us. And let me give you another piece of advice: never use hard words among friends. Do you remember the Mary Janes which Manyloides brought for you in his pocket to the hotel at Tavistock?"—Here Alaric turned as pale as a spectre.—"Don't talk of bribes, my dear fellow. We are all of us giving and taking bribes from our cradles to our graves; but men of the world generally call them by some prettier names. Now, if you are not desirous to throw your cards up altogether, get these shares for Val, and let him or me have them to-morrow morning." And so saying Undy disappeared into the House, through the side

door out of the hall, which is appropriated to the use of honourable members.

And then Alaric was left alone. He had never hitherto realized the true facts of the position in which he had placed himself; but now he did so. He was in the hands of these men, these miscreants, these devils; he was completely at their mercy, and he already felt that they were as devoid of mercy as they were of justice. A cold sweat broke out all over him, and he continued walking up and down the hall, ignorant as to where he was, and what he was doing, almost thoughtless, stunned as it were by his misery, and the conviction that he was a ruined man. He had remained there an hour after Undy had left him, before he roused himself sufficiently to leave the hall and think of returning home. It was then seven o'clock, and he remembered that he had asked his cousin to dine with him at that hour. He got into a cab, therefore, and desired to be driven home.

Oh, the misery of that drive! He never forgot it, and as he told his wife in after times, of all the wretched moments he spent, those were the most unendurable. It is the anticipation of our sorrows that breaks us down. The devoted mother, watching the death-bed of her child, is all but unable to support the agony of her apprehension. But when God has taken the sufferer to himself, the broken heart of the sorrower is

soon healed by his mercy. It is so, also, with our other misfortunes. When they are here, we can bear them ; it is the coming that lays us low.

What was he to do ? On one point he instantly made up his mind. He would not give one shilling to Captain Val ; he would not advance another shilling to Undy ; and he would at once sell out his own shares, and make such immediate restitution as might now be in his power. The mention of Manyloides, and the mining shares had come home to him with frightful reality, and nearly stunned him. What right, indeed, had he to talk of bribes with scorn ; he who so early in his own life had allowed himself to be bought ? How could he condemn the itching palm of such a one as Val Scott ; he who had been so ready to open his own, when he had been tempted by no want, by no poverty ?

He would give nothing to Captain Val to bribe him to silence. He knew that if he did so, he would be a slave for ever. The appetite of such a shark as that, when once he has tasted blood, is unappeasable. There is nothing so ruinous as buying the silence of a rogue who has a secret. What you buy, you never possess ; and the price that is once paid must be repaid again and again, as often as the rogue may demand it. Any alternative must be better than this.

And yet what other alternative was there ? He did not doubt that Val, when disappointed

of his prey, would reveal whatever he might know to his wife, or to his step-son. Then there would be nothing for Alaric but confession and ruin. And how could he believe what Undy Scott had told him? who else could have given information against him, but Undy himself? who else could have put up so heavily stupid a man as Captain Scott to make such a demand? Was it not clear that his own colleague, his own partner, his own intimate associate, Undy Scott himself, was positively working out his ruin? Where were now his high hopes, where now his seat in Parliament, his authority at the board, his proud name, his soaring ambition, his constant watchword? Excelsior—ah me—no! no longer excelsior! but he thought of the cells of Newgate, of convict prisons; then of his young wife and of his baby! As the cab drove up to his own door, he clasped his throbbing temples in both his hands, and bethought himself whether his only release might not be in suicide.

He made an effort, however, to assume his ordinary demeanour, and partially succeeded. He went at once up to his drawing-room, and there he found Charley and Gertrude waiting dinner for him; luckily he had no other guests.

“Are you ill, Alaric?” said Gertrude, directly she saw him.

“Ill—no,” said he; “only fagged, dearest; fagged and worried, and badgered and bored; but, thank God, not ill;” and he endeavoured

to put on his usual face, and speak in his usual tone. "I have kept you waiting most unmercifully for your dinner, Charley; but then, I know you navvies always lunch on mutton-chops."

"Oh, I am not particularly in a hurry," said Charley, "but I deny the lunch. This has been a bad season for mutton-chops in the neighbourhood of Somerset House; somehow they have not grown this year."

Alaric ran up to prepare for dinner, and his wife followed him. "Oh! Alaric," said she, "you are so pale, what is the matter? do tell me?" and she put her arm through his, took hold of his hand and looked up into his face.

"The matter! nothing is the matter, a man can't always be grinning;" and he gently shook her off, and walked through their bed-room to his own dressing-room. Having entered it he shut the door, and then sitting down bowed his head upon a small table and buried it in his hands. All the world seemed to go round and round with him; he was giddy, and felt that he could not stand.

Gertrude paused a moment in the bed-room to consider, and then followed him. "What is it you want?" said he, as soon as he heard the handle turn—"do leave me alone for one moment. I am fagged with the heat and I want one minute's rest."

"Oh, Alaric, I see you are ill," said she. "For God's sake do not send me from you"—and coming into the room she knelt down beside his chair.

“I know you are suffering, Alaric ; do let me do something for you.”

He longed to tell her everything. He panted to share his sorrows with one other bosom ; to have one near him to whom he could speak openly of everything, to have one counsellor in his trouble. In that moment he all but resolved to disclose everything to her ; but at last he found that he could not do it. Charley was there waiting for his dinner ; and were he now to tell his secret to his wife, neither of them, neither he nor she, would be able to act the host or hostess. If done at all it could not at any rate be done at the present moment.

“I am better now,” said he, giving a long and deep sigh ; and then he threw his arms round his wife and passionately embraced her. “My own angel, my best, best love ; how much too good or much too noble you are for such a husband as I am.”

“I wish I could be good enough for you,” she replied, as she began to arrange his things for dressing. “You are so tired, dearest ; wash your hands and come down—don’t trouble yourself to dress this evening ; unless, indeed, you are going out again.”

“Gertrude,” said he, “if there be a soul on earth that has not in it a spark of what is good or generous, it is the soul of Undy Scott ;” and so saying he began the operations of his toilet.

Now Gertrude had never liked Undy Scott ; she had attributed to him whatever faults her

husband might have as a husband ; and at the present moment she was not inclined to fight for any of the Scott family.

“ He is a very worldly man, I think,” said she.

“ Worldly—no—but hellish ;” said Alaric, “ hellish and damnable and fiendish.”

“ Oh, Alaric, what has he done ?”

“ Never mind ; I cannot tell you ; he has done nothing. It is not that he has done anything, or can do anything to me—but his heart—but never mind—I wish—I wish I had never seen him.”

“ Alaric, if it be about money, tell me the worst, and I’ll bear it without a murmur. As long as you are well I care for nothing else—have you given up your place ?”

“ No, dearest—no ; I can keep my place. It is nothing about that. I have lost no money ; I have rather made money. It is the ingratitude of that man which almost kills me. But come, dearest, we will go down to Charley. And Gertrude, mind this, be quite civil to Mrs. Val at present. We will break from the whole set before long ; but in the meantime I would have you be very civil to Mrs. Val.”

And so they went down to dinner, and Alaric, after taking a glass of wine, played his part almost as though he had no weight upon his soul. After dinner he drank freely, and as he drank his courage rose. “ Why should he tell her,” he said to himself as he went to bed. “ The chances are that all will yet go well.”

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. VAL'S NEW CARRIAGE.

ON the next morning Alaric went to his office without speaking further as to the trouble on his mind. He had resolved during the night that it would be useless for him to make his wife unhappy and to lower himself in her estimation, if by any means this secret could be kept from her, and from the world. There were still chances which might befriend him ; those shares, which he now so hated, might possibly rise in value till they would enable him to pay all that he owed ; and it was possible also, in spite of what had occurred, that Undy and Val might both hold their tongues ; nay, it was quite on the cards that Val knew nothing about it, and that all that had been said yesterday was a knavish scheme of Undy's for raising money.

He tried to comfort himself in this way as he walked down to his office. Then he had also to decide whether it would better suit his purpose to sell out at once and pay up every shilling that he could, or whether he would hold on, and hope that Undy's predictions would be fulfilled and that the bridge shares would go on rising till they would sell for all that was required of him.

Unfortunate man ! what would he have given

now to change his position for Norman's single clerkship, or even for Charley's comparative poverty !

Gertrude knew that something was the matter, but she by no means anticipated the extent of her husband's misfortune. She knew that he was engaged with Undy in trafficking for shares, and for seats in Parliament ; and she surmised that his present anger against his partner arose from some treachery on Undy's part, most probably with reference to the future election at Strathbogy. She knew Alaric's deep anxiety to be in Parliament, and how greatly disappointed he would be at any interruption to his projects ; and she conceived that the promises made to him were to be broken, and that the borough interest of the Scotts was to be given to another. She grieved over what she supposed to be her husband's shattered hopes. Poor Gertrude ! how little did she yet know how low that high head was doomed to fall ; how utter was to be the ruin of that ambitious bosom to whose destiny her own was linked.

She stayed within all day ; but not all day in solitude. About four in the afternoon the Hon. Mrs. Val called, and with her came her daughter Clem, now Madame Jaquêtanàpe, and the two Miss Neverbends. M. Jaquêtanàpe had since his marriage made himself very agreeable to his honourable mother-in-law, so much so that he now occupied the place in her good graces which Undy

had formerly filled, and which after Undy's reign had fallen to Alaric's lot. Mrs. Val liked to have about her some confidential gentleman; and as she never thought of placing her confidence in her husband, she was prone to select first one man and then another as her taste and interest dictated. Immediately after their marriage Victoire and Clem had consented to join housekeeping with their parent; nothing could be more pleasant than this! their income was unembarrassed, and Mrs. Val, for the first time in her life, was able to set up her carriage. Among the effects arising from this cause, the female Neverbends, who had lately been worshippers of Gertrude, veered round in their idolatry, and paid their vows before Mrs. Val's new yellow panels. In this new carriage now came the four ladies to pay a morning visit to Mrs. Tudor. It was wonderful to see into how small dimensions the Miss Neverbends had contrived to pack, not themselves, but their crinoline.

As has before been hinted, Gertrude did not love Mrs. Val; nor did she love Clem the danseuse; nor did she specially love the Miss Neverbends. They were all of a class essentially different to that in which she had been brought up; and, moreover, Mrs. Val was not content to allow Gertrude into her set without ruling over her, or at any rate patronising her. Gertrude had borne with them all for her husband's sake; and was contented to do so yet for a while longer,

but she thought in her heart that she would be able to draw some consolation from her husband's misfortune if it should be the means of freeing her from Mrs. Val.

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Val, throwing herself down into a sofa as though she were exhausted—"what a dreadful journey it is to you up here! How those poor horses will stand it this weather I don't know, but it nearly kills me; it does indeed." The Tudors, as has been said, lived in one of the quiet streets of Westbournia, not exactly looking into Hyde Park, but very near to it; Mrs. Val, on the other hand, lived in Ebury Street, Pimlico; her house was much inferior to that of the Tudors; it was small, ill built, and afflicted with all the evils which bad drainage and bad ventilation can produce; but then it was reckoned to be within the precincts of Belgravia, and was only five minutes' walk from Buckingham Palace. Mrs. Val, therefore, had fair ground for twitting her dear friend with living so far away from the limits of fashion. "You really must come down somewhat nearer to the world; indeed you must, my dear," said the Hon. Mrs. Val.

"We are thinking of moving; but then we are talking of going to St. John's Wood, or Islington," said Gertrude, wickedly.

"Islington!" said the Honourable Mrs. Val, nearly fainting.

"Is not Islington and St. Giles' the same

place?" asked the innocent Clem, with some malice, however, to counterbalance her innocence.

"Oh, no!" said Lactimel. "St. Giles' is where the poor wretched starving Irish dwell. Their utter misery in the middle of this rich metropolis is a crying disgrace to the Prime Minister." Poor Badger, how much he has to bear! "Only think," continued Lactimel, with a soft pathetic drawl, "they have none to feed them, none to clothe them, none to do for them!"

"It is a great question," said Ugolina, "whether promiscuous charity is a blessing or a curse. It is probably the greatest question of the age. I myself am inclined to think——"

"But, ma," said Madame Jaquêtanàpe, "Mrs. Tudor doesn't really mean that she is going to live at St. Giles'; does she?"

"I said Islington," said Gertrude. "We may go to St. Giles' next, perhaps." Had she known all, how dreadful would such jokes have been to her.

Mrs. Val saw that she was being quizzed, and, not liking it, changed the conversation. "Ugolina," said she, "might I trouble you to look out of the front window? I hope those stupid men of mine are not letting the horses stand still. They were so warm coming here, that they will be sure to catch cold." The stupid men, however, were round the corner to the public-house, and Ugolina could only report

that as she did not see them she supposed the horses were walking about.

“And so,” said Mrs. Val, “Mr. Tudor is thinking of resigning his place at the Civil Service Board? and standing for that borough of Lord Gaberlunzie’s, in Aberdeenshire.”

“I really cannot say,” said Gertrude; “but I believe he has some idea of going into Parliament. I rather believe he will continue to hold his place.”

“Oh, that I know to be impossible! I was told that by a gentleman who has been much longer in the service than Mr. Tudor, and who understands all its bearings.” She here alluded to Fidus Neverbend.

“I cannot say,” said Gertrude. “I do not think Mr. Tudor has quite made up his mind yet.”

“Well, my dear, I’ll tell you fairly what I think about it. You know the regard I have for you and Mr. Tudor. He too is Clementina’s trustee; that is to say her fortune is partly consigned to his care; so I cannot but have a very great interest about him, and be very anxious that he should do well. Now, my dear, I’ll tell you fairly what I think, and what all the world is saying. He ought not to think of Parliament. He ought not, indeed, my dear. I speak for your sake, and your child’s. He is not a man of fortune, and he ought not to think of Parlia-

ment. He has a very fine situation, and he really should be contented."

This was intolerable to Gertrude. She felt that she must put Mrs. Val down, and yet she hardly knew how to do it without being absolutely rude; whereas her husband had specially begged her to be civil to this woman at present. "Oh," said she, with a slight smile, "Mr. Tudor will be able to take care of himself; you will find, I hope, that there is no cause for uneasiness."

"Well, I hope not. I am sure I hope not," said Mrs. Val, looking very grave. "But I tell you fairly that the confidence which we all have in your husband will be much shaken if he does anything rash. He should think of this, you know. He has no private fortune to back him; we must remember that."

Gertrude became very red in the face; but she would not trust herself to answer Mrs. Val at the spur of the moment.

"It makes such a difference, when one has got no private fortune," said Madame Jaquêtanàpe, the heiress. "Does it not, Lactimel?"

"Oh, indeed it does," said Lactimel. "I wish every one had a private fortune; it would be so nice, wouldn't it?"

"There would be very little poetry in the world if you were to banish poverty," said Ugolina. "Poverty may be called the parent of

poetry. Look at Milton, how poor he was; and Homer, he begged his bread."

"But Lord Byron was not a beggar," said Clem, contemptuously.

"I do hope Mr. Tudor will think of what he is doing," continued Mrs. Val. "It is certainly most good-natured and most disinterested of my dear father-in-law, Lord Gaberlunzie, to place his borough at Mr. Tudor's disposal. It is just like him, dear good old nobleman. But, my dear, it will be a thousand pities if Mr. Tudor should be led on by his lordship's kindness to bring about his own ruin."

Mrs. Val had once in her life seen his good-natured lordship. Soon after her marriage she had insisted on Captain Val taking her down to the family mansion. She stayed there one night, and then left it, and since that had shown no further desire to visit Cauldkall Castle. She did not the less delight to talk about her dear good father-in-law, the lord. Why should she give his son Val board and lodging, but that she might be enabled to do so? She was not the woman to buy an article, and not make of it all the use of which it might be capable. "It will be a thousand pities if Mr. Tudor should be led on by his lordship's kindness to bring about his own ruin," said Mrs. Val.

"Pray do not concern yourself," said Gertrude. "I can assure you Mr. Tudor will manage very well for himself—but should any misfortune

happen to him he will not, you may be certain, attribute it to Lord Gaberlunzie."

"I am told that Sir Gregory also is most opposed to it," continued Mrs. Val. "I heard that from Mr. Neverbend, who is altogether in Sir Gregory's confidence,—did not you, my dears?" and she turned round to the sisters of Fidus for confirmation.

"I heard my brother say that as Mr. Tudor's office is not parliamentary but permanent, and as he has to attend from ten till four——"

"Alaric has not to attend from ten till four," said Gertrude, who could not endure the idea that her husband should be ranked with common clerks, like Fidus Neverbend.

"Oh, I didn't know," said Lactimel, meekly. "Perhaps Fidus only meant that as it is one of those offices where the people have something to do, the commissioners couldn't be in their offices and in Parliament at the same time."

"I did understand," said Ugolina, "that Sir Gregory Hardlines had put his veto upon it; but I must confess that it is a subject which I have not sufficiently studied to enable me——"

"It's 1200*l.* a year; isn't it?" asked the bride.

"1200*l.* a year," said her mother—"a very serious consideration when there is no private fortune to back it, on either side. Now if it were Victoire——"

"He couldn't sit in Parliament, ma, because

he's an alien—only for that I shouldn't think of his doing anything else."

"Perhaps that may be altered before long," said Lactimel, graciously.

"If Jews are to be admitted," said Ugolina, "who certainly belong to an alien nation; a nation expressly set apart and separated from all people—a peculiar nation distinct from all others, I for one cannot discern——"

What Ugolina could or could not discern about the Jews was communicated perhaps to Madame Jaquêtanàpe or to Lactimel, but not to Gertrude or to Mrs. Val; for the latter, taking Gertrude apart into a corner as it were of the sofa, began confidentially to repeat to her her fears about her husband.

"I see, my dear," said she, "that you don't like my speaking about it."

"Upon my word," said Gertrude, "I am very indifferent about it. But would it not be better if you said what you have to say to my husband?"

"I intend to do so. I intend to do that also. But I know that a wife ought to have influence over her husband, and I believe that you have influence over yours."

"Not the least," said Gertrude, who was determined to contradict Mrs. Val in everything.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Mrs. Val, who, among all her excellent acquirements, did not possess that specially excellent one of understand-

ing repartee. "I am very sorry to hear it, and I shall certainly speak to him the more seriously on that account. I think I have some influence over him; at any rate I ought to have."

"I dare say you have," said Gertrude; "Alaric always says that no experience is worth anything that is not obtained by years."

Mrs. Val at least understood this, and continued her lecture with some additional severity. "Well, my dear, I am glad he has so much wisdom. But what I was going to say is this: you know how much we have at stake with Mr. Tudor—what a very large sum of Clementina's money lies in his hands. Now I really should not have consented to the arrangement had I thought it possible that Mr. Tudor would have given up his income with the idea of going into Parliament. It wouldn't have been right or prudent of me to do so. I have the greatest opinion of your husband's talents and judgment; or I should not of course have entrusted him with the management of Clementina's fortune; but I really shall think it right to make some change if this project of his goes on."

"Why, what is it you suspect?" said Gertrude. "Do you think that Mr. Tudor intends to use your daughter's income if he loses a portion of his own? I never heard such a thing in my life."

"Hush! my dear—gently—I would not for worlds let Clementina hear a word of this; it

might disturb her young happiness. She is so charmed with her husband; her married life is so fortunate; Victoire is so—so—so everything that we all wish, that I would not for the world breathe in her hearing a shadow of a suspicion.”

“Good gracious! Mrs. Scott!—What do you mean? Suspicion—what suspicion? Do you suspect my husband of robbing you?” Oh! Gertrude; poor Gertrude! she was doomed to know it all before long.

“Oh dear, no,” said Mrs. Val; “nothing of the kind, I assure you. Of course we suspect nothing of the sort. But one does like to have one’s money in safe hands. Of course Mr. Tudor wouldn’t have been chosen as trustee, if he hadn’t had a good income of his own; and look here, my dear,”—and Mrs. Val whispered very confidentially,—“Mr. Tudor we all know is greatly concerned in this bridge that the committee is sitting about; and he and my brother-in-law Undecimus are always dealing in shares. Gentlemen do, I know, and therefore I don’t say that there is anything against it. But considering all, I hope Mr. Tudor won’t take it ill if we propose to change our trustee.”

“I am very certain he will not,” said Gertrude. “It is a laborious business, and he will be glad enough to be rid of it. When he was asked to accept it, he thought it would be ill-natured to refuse; I am certain, however, he will be very glad to give up the work to any other person who

may be appointed. I will be sure to tell him this evening what you have said."

"You need not trouble yourself to do that," said Mrs. Val. "I shall see him myself before long."

"It will be no trouble," said Gertrude, very indignantly, for she was very angry, and had, as she thought, great cause for anger. "I shall certainly think it my duty to do so after what has passed. Of course you will now take steps to relieve him as soon as possible."

"You have taken me up a great deal too quick, my dear," said Mrs. Val. "I did not intend——"

"Oh—one can't be too quick on such a matter as this," said Gertrude. "When confidence is once lost between two persons it is better that the connection which has grown out of confidence should be put an end to as soon as possible."

"Lost confidence! I said nothing about lost confidence!"

"Alaric will so understand it I am quite sure; at any rate I will tell him what you have said. Suspicion indeed! who has dared to suspect him of anything not honest or upright?"

Gertrude's eyes flashed with anger as she vindicated her absent lord. Mrs. Val had been speaking with bated breath, so that no one had heard her but she to whom she was speaking; but Gertrude had been unable so to confine her answers, and as she made her last reply Madame Jaquêtanèpe and the Misses Neverbend were all ears.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Mrs. Val. “Upon my word, my dear, it is amusing to hear you take it up. However, I assure you I meant nothing but what was kind and friendly. Come, Clementina, we have been sitting here a most unconscionable time. Will you allow me, my dear, to ring for my carriage?”

“Mama,” said Clem, “have you asked Mrs. Tudor to our little dance?”

“No, my dear; I have left that for you to do. It’s your party, you know,—but I sincerely hope Mrs. Tudor will come.”

“Oh, yes,” said Clementina, the tongue of whose eloquence was now loosened. “You must come, Mrs. Tudor!—indeed you must. It will be so charming; just a few nice people, you know, and nothing more.”

“Thank you,” said Gertrude; “but I never dance now.” She had inwardly resolved that nothing should ever induce her again to enter Mrs. Val’s house.

“Oh, but you must come,” said Clementina. “It will be so charming. We only mean to dance one kind of dance—that new thing they have just brought over from Spain—the Contrabandista. It is a polka step, only very quick, and you take every other turn by yourself; so you have to take your partner up and let him go as quick as possible. You don’t know how charming it is, and it will be all the rage. We are to

have the music out in the street, just as they have in Spain."

"It would be much too difficult for me," said Gertrude.

"It is difficult," said the enthusiastic Clem; "but Victoire gives us lessons in it every day from twelve to two,—doesn't he, Ugolina?"

"I'm afraid I shouldn't have time to go to school," said Gertrude.

"Oh, it doesn't take much time—six or seven or eight lessons will do it pretty well. I have almost learnt it already, and Ugolina is coming on very fast. Lactimel is not quite so perfect. She has learnt the step, but she cannot bring herself to let Victoire go quick enough. Do come, and bring Mr. Tudor with you."

"As he has not to attend from ten till four, he could come and take lessons too," said Lactimel, who now that she was no longer a hanger on of Gertrude's, could afford to have her little revenge.

"That would be delightful," said Clem. "Mr. Charles Tudor does come in sometimes at twelve o'clock, and I think he does it almost as well as Victoire."

Gertrude, however, would go neither to the rehearsals nor to the finished performance, and as Mrs. Val's men had by this time been induced to leave the beer-shop, the whole party went away, leaving Gertrude to her meditations.

CHAPTER VII.

TICKLISH STOCK.

ALARIC returned from his office worn and almost as wretched as he had been on the day before. He had spent a miserable day. In the morning Sir Gregory had asked him whether he had finally made up his mind to address the electors of Strathbogy. "No, not finally," said Alaric, "but I think I shall do so." "Then I must tell you, Tudor," said Sir Gregory, speaking more in sorrow than in anger, "that you will not have my countenance. I cannot but think also that you are behaving with ingratitude." Alaric prepared to make some petulant answer, but Sir Gregory, in the mean time, left the room.

Every one was falling away from him. He felt inclined to rush after Sir Gregory, and promise to be guided in this matter solely by him, but his pride prevented him; though he was no longer sanguine and confident as he had been a week ago, still his ambition was high. Those who play brag must brag it out, or they will lose their money. This had been said by Undy; but it was not the less true on that account. Alaric felt that he was playing brag, and that his only game was to brag it out. He might

lose, nay, probably would lose ; but still it was on the cards for him to win. Men who play for high stakes, who lead forlorn hopes, who risk all that they may gain much, have ever to undergo, in some point of their career, such torture as that which he now suffered. So, at least, he said to himself. Many fail, and are no more heard of ; but still some succeed ; some great souls, who can bear with constancy a period of adversity, win through and hold their heads high among their brethren. Such might still be his fate, if only he could be true to himself. He therefore made no recantation to Sir Gregory, ate no humble pie, descended in no degree from his high position—he sat through the day working hard for the service to which he belonged, determined that at any rate no fault should be found with him in that respect ; that no loss of energy should be discovered. A heavy task to him was that day's work, but still he accomplished it.

In the course of the afternoon he went into the city, and inquired personally as to the value of the shares. He found that they were still in demand, and, using his judgment as best he could, he thought it probable that they might still continue to rise in price at any rate for some few days ; he determined therefore not to sell, and then, going back to his office, remained at work till six o'clock.

He walked home slowly through the parks. His office and house were so circumstanced that,

though they were some two miles distant, he could walk from one to the other almost without taking his feet off the grass. This had been the cause of great enjoyment to him; but now he sauntered on with his hands behind his back, staring straight before him, with fixed eyes, going by his accustomed route, but never thinking for a moment where he was. The time was gone when he could watch the gambols of children, smile at the courtships of nursery-maids, watch the changes in the dark foliage of the trees, and bend from his direct path hither and thither to catch the effects of distant buildings, and make for his eye half rural landscapes in the middle of the metropolis. No landscapes had beauty for him now; the gambols even of his own baby were unattractive to him; leaves might bud forth and flourish and fall without his notice. How went the share-market? that was the only question that had an interest for him. The dallyings of Capel Court were the only courtships that he now cared to watch.

And with what a terribly eager eye had he now to watch them. If his shares went up, quickly, at once, with an unprecedented success, he might possibly be saved. That was all. But if they did not——! Such was the phase of life under which at the present moment it behoved him to exist.

And then when he reached his home, how was he welcomed? With all the fond love which a

loving wife can show! so much at least was his; but before he had felt the sweetness of her caresses, before he had acknowledged how great was the treasure that he possessed, forth from her eager lips had come the whole tale of Mrs. Val's impertinence.

"I will never see her again, Alaric! never; she talked of her daughter's money, and said something of suspicion!" Suspicion! Gertrude's eye again flashed fire with anger; and she all but stamped with her little foot upon the ground. Suspicion! suspect him, her husband, the choice of her heart, her Alaric, the human god whom she worshipped! suspect him of robbery, her lord, her heart, her soul, the strong staff on which she leaned so securely, with such true feminine confidence. Suspect him of common vile dishonesty!—"You will never ask me to see her again; will you, Alaric?"

What was he to say to her? how was he to bear this? His heart yearned to tell her all; he longed for the luxury of having one bosom to whom he could entrust his misery, his slight remaining hope. But how could he himself, at one blow, by one word, destroy the high and polished shaft on which she whom he loved had placed him. He could not do it. He would suffer by himself; hope by himself, cease to hope by himself, and endure all, till either his sufferings or his hopes should be over.

He had to pretend that he was indignant at

Mrs. Val's interference; he had to counterfeit the feelings of outraged honour, which was so natural to Gertrude. This he failed to do well. Had he been truly honest; had that woman's suspicion really done him injustice, he would have received his wife's tidings with grave displeasure, and have simply resolved to acquit himself as soon as possible of the disagreeable trust which had been reposed in him. But such was not now his conduct. He contented himself by calling Mrs. Val names, and pretended to laugh at her displeasure.

"But you will give up this trust, won't you?" said Gertrude.

"I will think about it," said he. "Before I do anything I must consult old Figgs. Things of that kind can't be put out of their course by the spleen of an old woman like Mrs. Val."

"Oh, Alaric, I do so wish you had nothing to do with these Scotts!"

"So do I," said he, bitterly; "I hate them—but, Gertrude, don't talk about them now; my head aches, and I am tired."

He sat at home the whole evening; and though he was by no means gay, and hardly affectionate in his demeanour to her, yet she could not but feel that some good effect had sprung from his recent dislike to the Scotts since it kept him at home with her. Lately he had generally spent his evenings at his club. She longed to speak to him of his future career, of

his proposed seat in Parliament, of his office-work ; but he gave her no encouragement to speak of such things, and as he pleaded that he was ill she left him in quiet on his sofa.

On the next morning he again went to his office, and in the course of the morning a note was brought to him from Undy. It ran as follows :—

MY DEAR TUDOR,

Is Val to have the shares ? Let me have a line by the bearer.

Yours ever,

U. S.

To this he replied by making an appointment to meet Undy before dinner. He resolved as firmly as ever that he would not give a share to Captain Val, and he resolved that he would brazen it out with Undy. At their last meeting he had, to a certain extent, suffered Undy to bully him. His attempt then had been to keep this evil genius of his in good humour ; this had not succeeded ; the more he had given way the more overbearing had Undy become. He would now try another course ; he would be the bully, and see what that would do—he did not in the least doubt his own courage ; and he did somewhat doubt Undy's.

As he expected, Undy came to the appointment. Alaric had named his own office because he thought that he would there be the most

sure of having quiet possession of an undisturbed room ; had he appointed the meeting at his club, some one might have overheard their dispute. At his office, at the hour he had named, it was probable that no one but the maid-servants could do so.

At the time fixed Undy came, and was shown by the sole remaining messenger into Alaric's private room. The two shook hands together in their accustomed way. Undy smiled good-humouredly, as he always did ; and Alaric maintained his usual composed and uncommunicative look.

“ Well,” said Undy, sitting down, “ how about these shares?”

“ I am glad you have come,” said Alaric, “ because I want to speak to you with some earnestness.”

“ I am quite in earnest myself,” said Undy ; “ and so by G— is Val. I never saw a fellow more in earnest—nor yet apparently more hard up. I hope you have the shares ready, or else a cheque for the amount.”

“ Look here, Undy ; if my doing this were the only means of saving both you and me from rotting in gaol, by the Creator that made me I would not do it.”

“ I don't know that it will have much effect upon me, one way or the other,” said Undy, coolly ; “ but it seems to me to be the only way that can save yourself from some such fate.

Shall I tell you what the clauses are of this new bill about trust property?"

"I know the clauses well enough; I know my own position; and I know yours also."

"D—— your impudence," said Undy; "how do you dare to league me with your villany? Have I been the girl's trustee? have I drawn, or could I have drawn, a shilling of her money? I tell you, Tudor, you are in the wrong box. You have one way of escape and one only. I don't want to ruin you; I'll save you if I can; I think you have treated the girl in a most shameful way, nevertheless I'll save you if I can; but mark this, if this money be not at once produced I cannot save you."

Alaric felt that he was covered with cold perspiration. His courage did not fail him; he would willingly have taken Undy by the throat could his doing so have done himself or his cause any good; but he felt that he was nearly upset by the cool deep villany of his companion.

"I have treated the girl badly,—very badly," he said, after a pause; "whether or no you have done so too I leave to your own conscience, if you have a conscience. I do not now mean to accuse you; but you may know this for certain; my present anxiety is to restore to her that which I have taken from her; and for no earthly consideration—not to save my own wife, will I increase the deficiency."

"Why man, what nonsense you talk—as if I

did not know all the time that you have your pocket full of these shares."

"Whatever I have, I hold for her. If I could succeed in getting out of your hands enough to make up the full sum that I owe her ——"

"You will succeed in getting nothing from me. When I borrowed 5000*l.* from you, it was not understood that I was to be called upon for the money in three or four months' time."

"Now look here, Scott; you have threatened me with ruin and a prison, and I will not say but your threats may possibly prove true. It may be that I am ruined; but if I fall, you shall share my fall."

"That's false," said Undy. "I am free to hold my head before the world, which you are not. I have done nothing to bring me to shame."

"Nothing to bring you to shame, and yet you would now have me give you a further portion of this girl's money!"

"Nothing—I care nothing about the girl's money. I have not touched it, nor do I want to touch it. I bring you a message from my brother; you have ample means of your own to comply with his request."

"Then tell your brother," said Alaric, now losing all control over his temper—"tell your brother, if indeed he have any part in this villany, tell your brother that if it were to save me from the gallows, he should not have a shilling.

I have done very badly in this matter; I have acted shamefully, and I am ashamed, but——”

“Oh, I want to hear none of your rhapsodies,” said Undy. “If you will not now do what I ask you, I may as well go, and you may take the consequences;” and he lifted his hat as though preparing to take his leave.

“But you shall hear me,” said Alaric, rising quickly from his seat and standing between Undy and the door. Undy very coolly walked to the bell and rang it. “I have much to answer for,” continued Alaric, “but I would not have your sin on my soul, I would not be as black as you are, though by being so, I could save myself with certainty from all earthly punishment.”

As he finished, the messenger opened the door. “Show Mr. Scott out,” said Alaric.

“Bye, bye,” said Undy. “You will probably hear from Mrs. Val and her daughter to-morrow,” and so saying, he walked jauntily along the passage, and went jauntily to his dinner at his club. It was part of his philosophy that nothing should disturb the even tenor of his way, or interfere with his animal comforts. He was at the present moment over head and ears in debt; he was playing a game, which, in all human probability, would end in his ruin; the ground was sinking beneath his feet on every side; and yet he thoroughly enjoyed his dinner. Alaric could not make such use of his philosophy. Undy Scott

might be the worse man of the two, but he was the better philosopher.

Not on the next day, or on the next, did Alaric hear from Mrs. Val, but on the following Monday he got a note from her begging him to call in Ebury-street. She underscored every line of it once or twice, and added, in a postscript, that he would, she *was sure, at once acknowledge* the NECESSITY of her *request*, as she *wished to communicate with him on the subject* of her DAUGHTER'S FORTUNE.

Alaric, immediately sent an answer to her by a messenger. "My dear Mrs. Scott," said he, "I am very sorry that an engagement prevents my going to you this evening, but, as I judge by your letter, and by what I have heard from Gertrude, that you are anxious about this trust arrangement, I will call at ten to-morrow morning on my way to the office."

Having written and despatched this, he sat for an hour leaning with his elbows on the table and his hands clasped, looking with apparent earnestness at the rows of books which stood inverted before him, trying to make up his mind as to what step he should now take.

Not that he sat an hour undisturbed. Every five minutes some one would come knocking at the door; the name of some aspirant to the Civil Service would be brought to him, or the card of some influential gentleman desirous of having a little job perpetrated in favour of his own

peculiarly interesting, but perhaps not very highly-educated young candidate. But on this morning Alaric would see no one; to every such intruder he sent a reply that he was too deeply engaged at the present moment to see any one. After one he would be at liberty, &c. &c.

And so he sat and looked at the books; but he could in nowise make up his mind. He could in nowise bring himself even to try to make up his mind—that is to make any true effort towards doing so. His thoughts would run off from him, not into the happy outer-world, but into a multitude of noisy, unpleasant paths, all intimately connected with his present misery, but none of which led him at all towards the conclusions at which he would fain arrive. He kept on reflecting, what Sir Gregory would think when he heard of it; what all those clerks would say at the Weights and Measures, among whom he had held his head so high; what shouts there would be among the navvies and other low pariahs of the service; how Harry Norman would exult;—but he did not yet know Harry Norman;—how the Woodwards would weep, how Gertrude—and then as he thought of that he bowed his head, for he could no longer endure the open light of day. At one o'clock he was no nearer to any decision than he had been when he reached his office.

At three he put himself into a cab, and was taken to the city. Oh, the city, the weary city,

where men go daily to look for money, but find none; where every heart is eaten up by an accursed famishing after gold; where dark gloomy banks come thick on each other, like the black ugly apertures to the realms below in a mining district, each of them a separate little pit-mouth into hell. Alaric went into the city, and found that the shares were still rising. That imperturbable witness was still in the chair at the committee, and men said that he was disgusting the members by the impregnable endurance of his hostility. A man who could answer 2250 questions without admitting anything must be a liar! Such a one could convince no one! And so the shares went on rising, rising, and rising, and Messrs. Blocks, Piles, and Cofferdam were buying up every share; either doing that openly—or else selling on the sly.

Alaric found that he could at once realize 7500%. Were he to do this, there would be at any rate seven eighths of his ward's fortune secure.

Might he not, in such case, calculate that even Mrs. Val's heart would be softened, and that time would be allowed him to make up the small remainder? Oh, but in such case he must tell Mrs. Val; and could he calculate on her forbearance? Might he not calculate with much more certainty on her love of triumphing? would he not be her slave if she had the keeping of his secret? And why should he run so terrible a risk of destroying himself? Why should he

confide in Mrs. Val, and deprive himself of the power of ever holding up his head again, when, possibly, he might still run out his course with full sails, and bring his vessel into port, giving no knowledge to the world of the perilous state in which she had been thus ploughing the deep? He need not at any rate tell everything to Mrs. Val, at his coming visit on the morrow.

He consulted his broker with his easiest air of common concern as to his money; and the broker gave him a dubious opinion. "They may go a little higher, sir; indeed I think they will. But they are ticklish stock, sir,—uncommon ticklish. I should not like to hold many myself, sir." Alaric knew that the man was right; they were ticklish stock; but nevertheless he made up his mind to hold on a little longer.

He then got into another cab and went back to his office; and as he went he began to bethink himself to whom of all his friends he might apply for such a loan as would enable him to make up this sum of money, if he sold his shares on the morrow. Captain Cuttwater was good for 1000*l.*, but he knew that he could not get more from him. It would be bad borrowing, he thought, from Sir Gregory. Intimate as he had been with that great man, he knew nothing of his money concerns; but he had always heard that Sir Gregory was a close man. Sir Warwick, his other colleague, was in easy circumstances; but then he had never been intimate with Sir

Warwick. Norman—ah, if he had known Norman now, Norman would have pulled him through; but hope in that quarter there was, of course, none. Norman was gone, and Norman's place had been filled by Undy Scott! What could be done with Undy Scott he had already tried. Fidus Neverbend! he had a little money saved; but Fidus was not the man to do anything without security. He, he Alaric Tudor, he, whose credit had stood, did stand, so high, did not know where to borrow, how to raise a thousand pounds; and yet he felt that had he not wanted it so sorely, he could have gotten it easily.

He returned to his office and set himself hard to work. His task there was not an easy one; he, the remodeller of others, could not be allowed to flag himself. The really hard work of the office fell chiefly on his shoulders. Sir Gregory sat in his office, and planned with slow deliberation great revolutions; how also to prevent greater revolutions! He was now the great Akinetos of the Civil Service. He, as a reformer, had set on foot great movements; but now, as is the case with all great reformers when they come into office, he had to act as drag to the coach which he himself had put upon its wheels. He sat apart therefore in great dignity, beginning already to learn the lesson which old age and success so generally teach, that great is the power of doing nothing.

On Alaric rested the harder work of the office, the management of little details, the answering of big men's letters, the quieting of all difficulties, and such like;—and like other new brooms he had gone to it with a will. He, resolving to set a good example, had worked in season and out of season; and now he felt, when men's eyes were likely to be upon him, that it behoved him more than ever to be true to himself.

He was in a bad state for work when he got back to the office on that day. He was flurried, ill at ease, wretched, all but distracted; nevertheless he went rigidly to it, and remained there till late in the evening. He was a man generally blessed with excellent health; but now he suddenly found himself ill, and all but unable to accomplish the task which he had prescribed to himself. His head was heavy and his eyes weak, and he could not bring himself to think of the papers which lay before him.

Then at last he went home, and had another sad and solitary walk across the parks, during which he vainly tried to rally himself again and collect his energies for the work which he had to do. It was in such emergencies as this, that he knew that it most behoved a man to fall back upon what manliness there might be within him; now was the time for him to be true to himself; he had often felt proud of his own energy of purpose; and now was the opportunity

for him to use such energy, if his pride in this respect had not been all in vain.

Such were the lessons with which he endeavoured to strengthen himself, but it was in vain; he could not feel courageous, he could not feel hopeful, he could not do other than despair. When he got home, he again prostrated himself, again declared himself ill, again buried his face in his hands, and answered the affection of his wife by saying that a man could not always be cheerful, could not always laugh. Gertrude, though she was very far indeed from guessing the truth, felt that something extraordinary was the matter, and knew that her husband's uneasiness was connected with the Scotts.

He came down to dinner, and though he ate but little, he drank glass after glass of sherry. He thus gave himself courage to go out in the evening and face the world at his club. He found Undy there as he expected, but he had no conversation with him, though they did not absolutely cut each other. Alaric fancied that men stared at him, and sat apart by himself, afraid to stand up among talking circles, or to put himself forward as it was his wont to do. He himself avoided other men, and then felt that others were avoiding him. He took up one evening paper after another, pretending to read them, but hardly noticing a word that came beneath his eye; at last, however, a name struck him which riveted his attention, and he read

the following paragraph, which was among many others, containing information as to the coming elections.

“Strathbogy.—We hear that Lord Gaberlunzie’s eldest son will retire from this borough, and that his place will be filled by his brother, the Honourable Captain Valentine Scott. The family have been so long connected with Strathbogy by ties of friendship and near neighbourhood, and the mutual alliance has been so much to the taste of both parties, that no severance need be anticipated.”

Alaric’s first emotion was one of anger at the whole Scott tribe, and his first resolve was to go down to Strathbogy and beat that inanimate fool Captain Val on his own ground; but he was not long in reflecting that, under his present circumstances, it would be madness in him to bring his name prominently forward in any quarrel with the Scott family. This disappointment he might at any rate bear; it would be well for him if this were all. He put the paper down with an affected air of easy composure, and walked home through the glaring gas-lights, still trying to think—still trying, but in vain, to come to some definite resolve.

And then on the following morning he went off to call on Mrs. Val. He had as yet told Gertrude nothing. When she asked him what made him start so early, he merely replied that he had business to do on his road. As he went, he had

considerable doubt whether or no it would be better for him to break his word to Mrs. Val and not go near her at all. In such event he might be sure that she would at once go to work and do her worst; but, nevertheless, he would gain a day, or probably two, and one or two days might do all that he required; whereas he could not see Mrs. Val, without giving her some explanation, which if false would be discovered to be false, and if true would be self-condemnatory. He again, however, failed to decide, and at last knocked at Mrs. Val's door merely because he found himself there.

He was shown up into the drawing-room, and found, of course, Mrs. Val seated on a sofa; and he also found, which was not at all of course, Captain Val, on a chair on one side of the table and M. Victoire Jaquêtanàpe on the other. Mrs. Val shook hands with him much in her usual way, but still with an air of importance in her face, the Frenchman was delighted to see M. Tudere, and the Honourable Val got up from his chair, said "How do," and then sat down again.

"I requested you to call, Mr. Tudor," said Mrs. Val, opening her tale in a most ceremonious manner, "because we all think it necessary to know somewhat more than has yet been told to us of the manner in which my daughter's money has been invested."

Captain Val wiped both his mustaches with the middle finger of his right hand, by way of saying that he quite assented to his wife's proposition; and Victoire remarked that "Madame was a leetle anxious, just a leetle anxious; not that anything could be wrong with M. Tudere, but because she was one excellent mama."

"I thought you knew, Mrs. Scott," said Alaric, "that your daughter's money is in the funds."

"Then I may understand clearly that none of the amount so invested has been sold out or otherwise appropriated by you," said Mrs. Val.

"Will you allow me to inquire what has given rise to these questions, just at the present moment?" asked Alaric.

"Yes, certainly," said Mrs. Val; "rumours have reached my husband—rumours which, I am happy to say, I do not believe—that my daughter's money has been used for purposes of speculation." Whereupon Captain Val again wiped his upper lip, but did not find it necessary to speak.

"May I venture to ask Captain Scott from what source such rumours have reached him?"

"Ah—ha—what sources? d—— lies, very likely; d—— lies, I dare say; but people do talk—eh—you know"—so much the eloquent embryo member for Strathbogy vouchsafed.

"And, therefore, Mr. Tudor, you mustn't be surprised that we should ask you this question."

"It is one simple, simple question," said Vic-

toire, and if M. Tudere will say that it is all right, I, for myself, will be satisfied." The amiable Victoire, to tell the truth, was still quite satisfied to leave his wife's income in Alaric's hands, and would not have been at all satisfied to remove it to the hands of his respected step-papa-in-law, or even his admired mama-in-law.

"When I undertook this trust," said Alaric, "which I did with considerable hesitation, I certainly did not expect to be subjected to any such cross-examination as this. I consider such questions as insults, and therefore I shall refuse to answer them. You, Mrs. Scott, have of course a right to look after your daughter's interests, as has M. Jaquêtanàpe to look after those of his wife; but I will not acknowledge that Captain Scott has any such right whatsoever, nor can I think that his conduct in this matter is disinterested"—and ~~he~~ as he spoke he looked at Captain Val, but he might just as well have looked at the door; Captain Val only wiped his mustache with his finger once more. "My answer to your inquiries, Mrs. Scott, is this—I shall not condescend to go into any details as to Madame Jaquêtanàpe's fortune with any one but my co-trustee. I shall, however, on Saturday next, be ready to give up my trust to any other person who may be legally appointed to receive it, and will then produce all the property that has been entrusted to my keeping;" and so saying, Alaric got up and took his hat as though to depart.

“And do you mean to say, Mr. Tudor, that you will not answer my question?” said Mrs. Scott.

“I mean to say, most positively, that I will answer no questions,” said Alaric.

“Oh, confound, not do at all; d——,” said the captain. “The girl’s money all gone, and you won’t answer questions!”

“No!” shouted Alaric; walking across the room, till he closely confronted the captain. “No—no—I will answer no questions that may be asked in your hearing. But, that your wife’s presence protects you, I would kick you down your own stairs before me.”

Captain Val retreated a step—he could retreat no more—and wiped his mustaches with both hands at once. Mrs. Val screamed. Victoire took hold of the back of a chair, as though he thought it well that he should be armed in the general battle that was to ensue; and Alaric, without further speech, walked out of the room, and went away to his office.

“So you have given up Strathbogy?” said Sir Gregory to him in the course of the day.

“I think I have,” said Alaric; “considering all things, I believe it will be the best for me to do so.”

“Not a doubt of it,” said Sir Gregory—“not a doubt of it, my dear fellow;” and then Sir Gregory began to evince by the cordiality of his official confidence, that he had fully taken Alaric

back into his good graces. It was nothing to him that Strathbogy had given up Alaric instead of Alaric giving up Strathbogy. He was sufficiently pleased at knowing that the danger of his being supplanted by his own junior was over.

And then Alaric again went into the weary city, again made inquiries about his shares, and again returned to his office, and thence to his home.

But on his return to his office, he found lying on his table a note in Undy's handwriting, but not signed, in which he was informed that things would yet be well, if the required shares should be forthcoming on the following day.

He crumpled the note tight in his hand, and was about to fling it among the waste paper, but in a moment he thought better of it, and smoothing the paper straight, he folded it, and laid it carefully on his desk.

That day, on his visit into the city, he had found that the bridge shares had fallen to less than the value of their original purchase-money; and that evening he told Gertrude everything. The author does not dare to describe the telling

CHAPTER VIII.

TRIBULATION.

WE must now return for a short while to Surbiton Cottage. It was not so gay a place as it once had been ; merry laughter was not so often heard among the shrubbery walks, nor was a boat to be seen so often glancing in and out between the lawn and the adjacent island. The cottage had become a demure, staid abode, of which Captain Cuttwater was in general the most vivacious inmate ; and yet there was soon to be marrying, and giving in marriage.

Linda's wedding day had twice been fixed. That first named had been postponed in consequence of the serious illness of Norman's elder brother. The life of that brother had been very different in its course from Harry's ; it had been dissipated at college in riotous living, and had since been stained with debauchery during the career of his early manhood in London. The consequence had been that his health had been broken down, and he was now tottering to an early grave.

Old Mr. Norman had for months past been all but heart-broken in watching the conduct and fate of his heir. He himself was a very old

man, and he knew that should he now die, as die he soon must in the course of nature, all the sweet braes and sunny meadows of Norman's Grove would soon melt away among Jews and usurers. It is hardly in human nature that a father should wish for the death of one child, in order that another might inherit his property; to do so was not at any rate in the nature of old Mr. Norman ; nevertheless, his only consolation was, to think that he had a second son of whom no father need be ashamed.

Cuthbert Norman was found to be so ill when the day first named for Linda's marriage approached, that it had been thought absolutely necessary to postpone the ceremony. What amount of consolation Mrs. Woodward might have received from the knowledge that her daughter, by this young man's decease, would become Mrs. Norman of Norman's Grove, we need not now inquire ; but such consolation, if it existed at all, did not tend to dispel the feeling of sombre disappointment which such delay was sure to produce. The heir, however, rallied, and another day, early in August, was fixed.

Katie, the while, was still an invalid ; and, as such, puzzled all the experience of that very experienced medical gentleman, who has the best aristocratic practice in the neighbourhood of Hampton Court. He, and the London physician, agreed that her lungs were not affected ; but yet she would not get well. The colour would not

come to her cheeks, the flesh would not return to her arms, nor the spirit of olden days shine forth in her eyes. She did not keep her bed, or confine herself to her room, but she went about the house with a slow, noiseless, gentle tread, so unlike the step of that Katie whom we once knew.

But that which was a mystery to the experienced medical gentleman, was no mystery to her mother. Mrs. Woodward well knew why her child was no longer rosy, plump, and *débonnaire*. As she watched her Katie move about so softly, as she saw her constant attempt to smile whenever her mother's eye was on her, that mother's heart almost gave way; she almost brought herself to own that she would rather see her darling the wife of an idle, ruined spendthrift, than watch her thus drifting away to an early grave. These days were by no means happy days for Mrs. Woodward.

When that July day was fixed for Linda's marriage, certain invitations were sent out to bid the family friends to the wedding. These calls were not so numerous as they had been when Gertrude became a bride. No Sir Gregory was to come down from town, no gallant speech-makers from London clubs were to be gathered there, to wake the echoes of the opposite shore with matrimonial wit. Mrs. Woodward could not bear that her daughter should be married altogether, as it were, in the dark; but for many

considerations the guests were to be restricted in numbers, and the mirth was to be restrained and quiet.

When the list was made out, Katie saw it, and saw that Charley's name was not there.

"Mama," she said, touching her mother's arm in her sweet winning way—"may not Charley come to Linda's wedding—you know how fond Harry is of him—would not Harry wish that he should be here?"

Mrs. Woodward's eyes immediately filled with tears, and she looked at her daughter, not knowing how to answer her. She had never spoken to Katie of her love, no word had ever passed between them on the subject which was now always nearest to the hearts of them both. Mrs. Woodward had much in her character, as a mother, that was excellent, nay all but perfect; but she could not bring herself to question her own children as to the inward secrets of their bosoms. She knew not at once how to answer Katie's question; and so she looked up at her with wistful eyes, laden with tears.

"You may do so, mama," said Katie. Katie was already a braver woman than her mother. "I think Harry would like it, and poor Charley will feel hurt at being left out—you may do it, mama, if you like; it will not do any harm."

Mrs. Woodward quite understood the nature of the promise conveyed in her daughter's assurance, and replied that Charley should be asked.

He was asked, and promised, of course, to come. But when the wedding was postponed, when the other guests were put off, he also was informed that his attendance at Hampton was not immediately required; and so he still remained a stranger to the cottage.

And then after a while another day was named, the guests, and Charley with them, were again invited, and Norman was again assured that he should be made happy. But, alas! his hopes were again delusive. News arrived at Surbiton Cottage which made it indispensable that the marriage should be again postponed, news worse than any which had ever yet been received there, news which stunned them all, and made it clear to them that this year was no time for marrying. Alaric had been arrested—Alaric, their own Gertrude's own husband, their son-in-law and brother-in-law, the proud, the high, the successful, the towering man of the world, Alaric had been arrested, and was to be tried for embezzling the money of his ward.

These fatal tidings were brought to Hampton by Harry Norman himself; how they were received we must now endeavour to tell.

It was not surprising that no tidings of Alaric's growing quarrel with the Scotts should have reached the Hampton party. The Tudors and the Woodwards were now almost entirely separated. Occasionally little notes passed between Gertrude and her mother or sisters, but

they did not contain that sort of confidential intercourse which generally takes place between a married daughter and her old family home, when nothing has occurred to break the old ties of family affection. Gertrude never wrote of her husband's career, neither did Mrs. Woodward or Linda ask any questions. Nor did Norman hear much of Alaric's London doings. The two men lived in different worlds, and never found themselves crossing each other's circles. It was known that Alaric was a great commissioner, with 1200*l.* a year, and one of the Magi of the Civil Service; it was known also that he was talked of as the future member of Parliament for Strathbogy; and that was all that was known of him at Hampton, when Harry came down one evening with news that was indeed unexpected.

But that it would be tedious we might describe the amazement with which that news was received at the Weights and Measures. Though the great men at the Weights were jealous of Alaric, they were not the less proud of him. They had watched him rise with a certain amount of displeasure, and yet they had no inconsiderable gratification in boasting that two of the Magi, the two working Magi of the Civil Service, had been produced by their own establishment. When therefore tidings reached them that Tudor had been summoned in a friendly way to Bow Street, that he had

there passed a whole morning, and that the inquiry had ended in his temporary suspension from his official duties, and in his having to provide two bailsmen, each for 1000*l.*, as security that he would on a certain day be forthcoming to stand his trial at the Old Bailey for defrauding his ward,—when I say these tidings were carried from room to room at the Weights and Measures, the feelings of surprise were equalled by those of shame and disappointment. Whether the special injuries received by Jones and Robinson enabled them to draw any consolation from a feeling of gratified revenge, we need not too closely inquire.

One at any rate of the beaten candidates felt no such consolation. To Norman the tidings brought unmixed grief. It was not in his heart to be gratified at the downfall of an old friend, even though that old friend had so deeply injured him ; but more than this,—let Alaric be ever so much his enemy, he was still to be his brother-in-law ; he was Mrs. Woodward's son-in-law ; he was Gertrude's husband.

No one knew who brought this news to the Weights and Measures. No one ever does know how such tidings fly ; one of the junior clerks had heard it from a messenger, to whom it had been told down stairs ; then another messenger who had been across to the Treasury Chambers with an immediate report as to a projected change

in the size of the authorised butter-firkin, heard the same thing, and so the news by degrees was confirmed.

But all this was not sufficient for Norman ; as soon as the rumour reached him, he went off to Bow Street, and there learnt the actual truth as it had been above stated. Alaric was then there, and the magistrates had decided on requiring bail ; he had, in fact, been committed.

It was some minutes before he could decide what he should do under such circumstances. It had not been his intention to go on that evening to Hampton ; but he concluded that now he had better do so. Bad news fly fast, and it would be for him to take care that the Woodwards should not first hear such news as these from strange lips. And then he thought of Gertrude. Had she heard it yet ? did she know to what a pass her chosen lord had brought her ? had she yet been taught that the father of her child was a swindler ? Norman was essentially a true man, and his heart now belonged exclusively to Linda ; but as he thought of these things he could not but also think of his ancient love.

It would be dreadful, certainly, that the Woodwards should first hear all this from the lips of a stranger, and this reflection induced Norman at once to go to Hampton ; but it was dreadful, also, to find himself burdened with the task of first telling such tidings. When he found him-

self knocking at the cottage-door he was still doubtful how he might best go through the work he had before him.

He found that he had a partial reprieve; but then it was so partial that it would have been much better for him to have had no such reprieve at all. Mrs. Woodward was at Sunbury with Linda, and no one was at home but Katie. What was he to do? was he to tell Katie? or was he to pretend that all was right, that no special business had brought him unexpectedly to Hampton.

"Oh, Harry, Linda will be so unhappy," said Katie, as soon as she saw him. "They have gone to dine at Sunbury, and they won't be home till ten or eleven. Uncle Bat dined early with me, and he has gone to Hampton Court. Linda will be so unhappy. But good gracious, Harry, is there anything the matter?"

"Mrs. Woodward has not heard from Gertrude to-day; has she?"

"No—not a word—Gertrude is not ill, is she? Oh, do tell me," said Katie, who now knew that there was some misfortune to be told.

"No; Gertrude is not ill."

"Is Alaric ill then? is there anything the matter with Alaric?"

"He is not ill," said Norman, "but he is in some trouble. I came down as I thought your mother should be told."

So much he said, but would say no more.

In this he probably took the most unwise course that was open to him. He might have held his tongue altogether, and let Katie believe that love alone had brought him down, as it had done so often before ; or he might have told her all, feeling sure that all must be told her before long. But he did neither ; he left her in suspense, and the consequence was that before her mother's return she was very ill.

It was past eleven before the fly was heard in which Linda and her mother returned home. Katie had then gone up stairs, but not to bed. She had seated herself in the arm-chair in her mother's dressing-room, and sitting there waited till she should be told by her mother what had occurred. When the sound of the wheels caught her ears, she came to the door of the room and held it in her hand that she might learn what passed. She heard Linda's sudden and affectionate greeting ; she heard Mrs. Woodward's expression of gratified surprise ; and then she heard also Norman's solemn tone, by which, as was too clear, all joy, all gratification, was at once suppressed. Then she heard the dining-room door close, and she knew that he was telling his tale to Linda and her mother.

Oh! the misery of that next hour! For an hour they remained there talking, and Katie knew nothing of what they were talking ; she knew only that Norman had brought unhappiness to them all. A dozen different ideas passed

across her mind. First she thought that Alaric was dismissed, then that he was dead; was it not possible that Harry had named Alaric's name to deceive her? might not this misfortune, whatever it was, be with Charley; might not he be dead? Oh! better so than the other. She knew, and said as much to herself over and over again; but she did not the less feel that his death must involve her own also.

At last the dining-room door opened, and she heard her mother's step on the stairs. Her heart beat so that she could hardly support herself. She did not get up; but sat quite quiet, waiting for the tidings which she knew that she should now hear. Her mother's face, when she entered the room, nearly drove her to despair; Mrs. Woodward had been crying, bitterly, violently, convulsively crying; and when one has reached the age of forty, the traces of such tears are not easily effaced, even from a woman's cheek.

"Mama, mama, what is it? pray, pray tell me; oh! mama, what is it?" said Katie, jumping up and rushing into her mother's arms.

"Oh! Katie," said Mrs. Woodward; "why are you not in bed; oh! my darling, I wish you were in bed; I do so wish you were in bed—my child, my child!" and, seating herself in the nearest chair, Mrs. Woodward again gave herself up to uncontrolled weeping.

Then Linda came up with the copious tears still streaming down her face. She made no

effort to control them ; at her age tears are the easiest resource in time of grief. Norman had kept her back a moment to whisper one word of love, and she then followed her mother into the room.

Katie was now kneeling at her mother's feet. "Linda," she said, with more quietness than either of the others were able to assume. "What has happened? what makes mama so unhappy? Has anything happened to Alaric?" But Linda was in no state to tell anything.

"Do tell me, mama," said Katie ; "do tell me all at once—has anything—anything happened to—to—Charley?"

"Oh, it is worse than that, a thousand times worse than that," said Mrs. Woodward, who, in the agony of her own grief, became for the instant ungenerous.

Katie's blood rushed back to her heart, and for a moment her own hand relaxed the hold which she had on that of her mother. She had never spoken of her love; for her mother's sake she had been silent; for her mother's sake she had determined to suffer and be silent—now, and ever!—Well; she would bear this also. It was but for a moment she relaxed her hold; and then again she tightened her fingers round her mother's hand, and held it in a firmer grasp. "It is Alaric, then?" she said.

"God forgive me," said Mrs. Woodward, speaking through her sobs—"God forgive me; I am

a broken-hearted woman, and say I know not what. My Katie, my darling, my best of darlings—will you forgive me?”

“Oh, mama,” said Katie, kissing her mother’s hands, and her arms, and the very hem of her garment—“oh, mama, do not speak so. But I wish I knew what this sorrow is, so that I might share it with you; may I not be told, mama? is it about Alaric?”

“Yes, Katie. Alaric is in trouble.”

“What trouble—is he ill?”

“No—he is not ill. It is about money.”

“Has he been arrested?” asked Katie, thinking of Charley’s misfortune. “Could not Harry get him out? Harry is so good, he would do anything, even for Alaric, when he is in trouble.”

“He will do everything for him that he can,” said Linda, through her tears.

“He has not been arrested,” said Mrs. Woodward; “he is still at home; but he is in trouble about Miss Golightly’s money—and—and he is to be tried.”

“Tried,” said Katie; “tried like a criminal!”

Katie might well express herself as horrified. Yes, he had to be tried like a criminal; tried as pickpockets, housebreakers, and shoplifters are tried, and for a somewhat similar offence; with this difference, however, that pickpockets, housebreakers, and shoplifters, are seldom educated men, and are, in general, led on to crime by want. He was to be tried for the offence of making

away with some of Miss Golightly's money, for his own purposes. This was explained to Katie, with more or less perspicuity; and then Gertrude's mother and sisters lifted up their voices together and wept.

He might, it is true, be acquitted; they would none of them believe him to be guilty, though they all agreed that he had probably been imprudent; but then the public shame of the trial! the disgrace which must follow such an accusation! What a downfall was here. "Oh, Gertrude! oh, Gertrude!" sobbed Mrs. Woodward; and, indeed, at that time, it did not fare well with Gertrude.

We have received various accounts, lately, frightful accounts, of the dishonesty of men in high station, who have sought to acquire wealth by the fraudulent use of the capital belonging to others. Such men, of course, know, when they begin this career, that they run a risk. They stake highly that they may gain much; they stake their name and fame, that they may gain wealth, to which they are not entitled. This is sufficiently intelligible of itself, light as wealth should be held, when weighed against name and fame. The blunder which men make in this respect would not be surprising, if they themselves were alone concerned, if a man could ruin himself and himself only. But the heartless, fiendish cruelty of these men is not intelligible. They have wives, on whose bosoms they

sleep; they have sisters, with whom they have played from their earliest infancy; they have daughters, whom they have just sent forth into the world, to sink or swim according to their father's credit; and these are all added to the stake. When the game is to be played out between the world and the sharper, the sharper throws in on his side, wife, sisters, and children, and while doing so, hardly thinks that he adds anything to his own wretched counter. And yet these men are fond of their wives and children! Now, this is not intelligible.

It was very late before Mrs. Woodward and her daughters went to bed that night; and then Katie, though she did not specially complain, was very ill. Her nerves, though they were naturally stronger than those of Linda, were not able as quickly to repair themselves, when wounded by any shock. They had lately received more than one wound, which was still unhealed; and now this additional blow, though she apparently bore it better than the others, altogether upset her. When the morning came, she complained of head-ache, and it was many days after that before she left her bed.

But Mrs. Woodward was up early. Indeed, she could hardly be said to have been in bed at all, for though she had laid down for an hour or two, she had not slept. Early in the morning, she knocked at Harry's door, and begged him to come out to her. He was not long in obeying

her summons, and soon joined her in the little breakfast parlour.

“Harry,” said she, “you must go and see Alaric.”

Harry’s brow grew black. On the previous evening he had spoken of Alaric without bitterness, nay, almost with affection; of Gertrude, he had spoken with the truest brotherly love; he had assured Mrs. Woodward that he would do all that was in his power for them; that he would spare neither his exertions nor his purse: he had a truer idea than she had of what might probably be the facts of the case, and was prepared, by all the means at his disposal, to help his sister-in-law, if such aid would help her. But he had not thought of seeing Alaric.

“I do not think it would do any good,” said he.

“Yes, Harry, it will; it will do the greatest good; whom else can I get to see him? who else can find out, and let us know what really is required of us, what we ought to do? I would do it myself, but I could not understand it; and he would never trust us sufficiently to tell me all the truth.”

“We will make Charley go to him. He will tell everything to Charley, if he will to any one.”

“We cannot trust Charley; he is so thought-

less, so imprudent. Besides, Harry, I cannot tell everything to Charley, as I can to you. If there be any deficiency in this woman's fortune, of course it must be made good; and in that case I must raise the money. I could not arrange all this with Charley."

"There cannot, I think, be very much wanting," said Norman, who had hardly yet realized the idea that Alaric had actually used his ward's money for his own purposes. "He has probably made some bad investment, or trusted persons that he should not have trusted. My small property is in the funds, and I can get the amount at a moment's notice. I do not think there will be any necessity to raise more money than that. At any rate, whatever happens, you must not touch your own income; think of Katie."

"But, Harry, dear, good, generous Harry—you are so good, so generous. But, Harry, we need not talk of that now. You will see him, though, won't you?"

"It will do no good," said Harry; "we have no mutual trust in each other."

"Do not be unforgiving, Harry; now that he requires forgiveness."

"If he does require forgiveness, Mrs. Woodward; if it shall turn out that he has been guilty, God knows that I will forgive him. I trust this may not be the case; and it would be useless for

me to thrust myself upon him now, when a few days may replace us again in our present relation to each other."

"I don't understand you, Harry; why should there always be a quarrel between two brothers, between the husbands of two sisters? I know you mean to be kind, I know you are most kind, most generous; but why should you be so stern?"

"What I mean is this—if I find him in adversity I shall be ready to offer him my hand; it will then be for him to say whether he will take it. But if the storm blow over, in such case I would rather that we should remain as we are."

Norman talked of forgiveness, and accused himself of no want of charity in this respect. He had no idea that his own heart was still hard as the nether millstone against Alaric Tudor. But yet such was the truth. His money he could give; he could give also his time and mind, he could lend his best abilities to rescue his former friend and his own former love from misfortune. He could do this, and he thought therefore that he was forgiving; but there was no forgiveness in such assistance. There was generosity in it, for he was ready to part with his money; there was kindness of heart, for he was anxious to do good to his fellow-creatures; but there were with these both pride and revenge. Alaric had out-topped him in everything, and it was sweet to Norman's pride that his hand should be the one

to raise from his sudden fall the man who had soared so high above him. Alaric had injured him, and what revenge is so perfect as to repay gross injuries by great benefits? Is it not thus that we heap coals of fire on our enemies' heads? Not that Norman indulged in thoughts such as these; not that he resolved thus to gratify his pride, thus to indulge his revenge. He was unconscious of his own sin, but he was not the less a sinner.

"No," said he, "I will not see him, myself; it will do no good."

Mrs. Woodward found that it was useless to try to bend him. That, indeed, she knew from long experience. It was then settled that she should go up to Gertrude that morning, traveling up to town together with Norman, and that when she had learned from her daughter, or from Alaric—if Alaric would talk to her about his concerns—what was really the truth of the matter, she should come to Norman's office, and tell him what it would be necessary for him to do. They both, as had Linda and Katie done through the night, expressed, over and over again, a conviction that Alaric could not really be guilty; and yet both had, deep-seated in the bottom of their hearts, a fear, a dread overpowering fear, that things would not go well with that loved household that had been established with so much heartfelt pride. Should it be necessary to do so, Norman promised that he would not refuse to see

Gertrude. Such was the only confession which Mrs. Woodward could succeed in wringing from him.

And then the marriage was again put off.—This, in itself, was a great misery; as young ladies who have just been married, or who may now be about to be married, will surely own. The words “put off” are easily written, the necessity of such a “put off” is easily arranged in the pages of a novel, an enforced delay of a month or two in an affair which so many folk willingly delay for so many years, sounds like a slight thing; but, nevertheless, a matrimonial “put off” is, under any circumstances, a great grief. To have to counter-write those halcyon notes which have given glad promise of the coming event; to pack up and put out of sight, and, if possible, out of mind, the now odious finery with which the house has, for the last weeks been strewed; to give the necessary information to the pastry-cook from whose counter the sad tidings will be disseminated through all the neighbourhood; to annul the orders which have probably been given for rooms and horses for the happy pair; to live, during the coming interval, a mark for pity’s un pitying finger; to feel, and know, and hourly calculate, how many slips there may be between the disappointed lip and the still distant cup; all these things in themselves make up a great grief, which is

hardly lightened by the knowledge that they have been caused by a still greater grief.

These things had Linda now to do, and the poor girl had none to help her in the doing of them. A few hurried words were spoken on that morning between her and Norman, and for the second time she set to work to put off her wedding. Katie, the mean time, lay sick in bed, and Mrs. Woodward had gone to London to learn the worst and to do the best in this dire affliction that had come upon them.

CHAPTER IX.

ALARIC TUDOR TAKES A WALK.

THERE is, undoubtedly, a propensity in human love to attach itself to excellence; but it has also, as undoubtedly, a propensity directly antagonistic to this, and which makes it put forth its strongest efforts in favour of inferiority. Watch any fair flock of children in which there may be one blighted bud, and you will see that that blighted one is the mother's darling. What filial affection is ever so strong as that evinced by a child for a parent in misfortune? Even among the rough sympathies of school-boys the cripple, the sickly child, or the orphan without a home, will find the warmest friendship and a stretch of kindness. Love, that must bow and do reverence to superiority, can protect and foster inferiority; and what is so sweet as to be able to protect?

Gertrude's love for her husband had never been so strong as when she learnt that that love must now stand in the place of all other sympathies, of all other tenderness. Alaric told her of his crime, and in his bitterness he owned that he was no longer worthy of her love. She answered by opening her arms to him with more warmth than ever, and bidding him rest his sad and weary head upon her breast. Had they not taken each

other for better or for worse? had not their bargain been that they would be happy together if such should be their lot, or sad together if God should so will it?—and would she be the first to cry off from such a bargain?

It seldom happens that a woman's love is quenched by a man's crime. Women in this respect are more enduring than men; they have softer sympathies, and less acute, less selfish, appreciation of the misery of being joined to that which has been shamed. It was not many hours since Gertrude had boasted to herself of the honour and honesty of her lord, and tossed her head with defiant scorn when a breath of suspicion had been muttered against his name. Then she heard from his own lips the whole truth, learnt that that odious woman had only muttered what she soon would have a right to speak out openly, knew that fame and honour, high position and pride of life, were all gone; and then in that bitter hour she felt that she had never loved him as she did then.

He had done wrong, he had sinned grievously; but no sooner did she acknowledge so much to herself than she acknowledged also that a man may sin and yet not be all sinful; that glory may be tarnished, and yet not utterly destroyed; that pride may get a fall, and yet live to rise again. He had sinned, and had repented; and now to her eyes he was again as pure as snow. Others would now doubt him, that must needs

be the case; but she would never doubt him; no, not a whit the more in that he had once fallen. He should still be the cynosure of her eyes, the pride of her heart, the centre of her hopes. Marina said of her husband when he came to her shattered in limb, from the hands of the torturer—

“ I would not change
My exiled, mangled, persecuted husband,
Alive or dead, for prince or paladin,
In story or in fable, with a world
To back his suit.”

Gertrude spoke to herself in the same language; she would not have changed her Alaric, branded with infamy as he now was, or soon would be, for the proudest he that carried his head high among the proud ones of the earth. Such is woman's love; such is the love of which a man's heart is never capable!

Alaric's committal had taken place very much in the manner in which it was told at the Weights and Measures. He had received a note from one of the Bow-street magistrates, begging his attendance in the private room at the police-office. There he had passed nearly the whole of one day, and he was also obliged to pass nearly the whole of another in the same office. On this second day the proceedings were not private, and he was accompanied by his own solicitor.

It would be needless to describe how a plain case was, as usual, made obscure by the lawyers,

how acts of Parliament were consulted, how the magistrate doubted, how indignant Alaric's attorney became when it was suggested that some insignificant piece of evidence should be admitted, which, whether admitted or rejected, could have no real bearing on the case. In these respects this important examination was like other important examinations of the same kind, such as one sees in the newspapers whenever a man above the ordinary felon's rank becomes amenable to the outraged laws. It ended, however, in Alaric being committed, and giving bail to stand his trial in about a fortnight's time; and in his being assured by his attorney that he would most certainly be acquitted. That bit of paper on which he had made an entry that certain shares bought by him had been bought on behalf of his ward, would save him; so said the attorney: to which, however, Alaric answered not much. Could any acutest lawyer, let him be made of never so fine an assortment of forensic indignation, now whitewash his name and set him again right before the world? He, of course, communicated with Sir Gregory, and agreed to be suspended from his commissionership till the trial should be over. His two colleagues then became bail for him.

So much having been settled, he got into a cab with his attorney, and having dropped that gentleman on his road, he returned home. The excitement of the examination and the necessity

for action had sustained him ; but now—what was to sustain him now ? How was he to get through the intervening fortnight, banished as he was from his office, from his club, and from all haunts of men. His attorney, who had other rogues to attend to besides him, made certain set appointments with him,—and for the rest, he might sit at home and console himself as best he might with his own thoughts. Excelsior ! This was the pass to which excelsior had brought him ! *Sic itur ad astra !*—alas, his road had taken him hitherto in quite a different direction.

He sent for Charley, and when Charley came, he made Gertrude explain to him what had happened. He had confessed his own fault once, to his own wife, and he could not bring himself to do it again. Charley was thunderstruck at the greatness of the ruin, but he offered what assistance he could give. Anything that he could do, he would. Alaric had sent for him for a purpose, and that purpose at any rate Charley could fulfil ; he went into the city to ascertain what was now the price of the Limehouse bridge shares, and returned with the news that they were falling, falling, falling.

No one else called at Alaric's door that day. Mrs. Val, though she did not come there, by no means allowed her horses to be idle ; she went about sedulously among her acquaintance, dropping tidings of her daughter's losses. " They

will have enough left to live upon, thank God," said she; "but did you ever hear of so barefaced, so iniquitous a robbery? Well, I am not cruel; but my own opinion is that he should certainly be hanged."

To this Ugolina assented fully, adding, that she had been so shocked by the suddenness and horror of the news, as to have become perfectly incapacitated ever since for any high order of thought.

Lactimel, whose soft bosom could not endure the idea of putting an end to the life of a fellow-creature, suggested perpetual banishment to the penal colonies, perhaps Norfolk Island. "And what will she do?" said Lactimel. "Indeed I cannot guess," said Ugolina; "her education has been sadly deficient."

None but Charley called on Alaric that day, and he found himself shut up alone with his wife and child. His own house seemed to him a prison. He did not dare to leave it; he did not dare to walk out and face the public as long as daylight continued; he was ashamed to show himself, and so he sat alone in his dining-room thinking, thinking, thinking. Do what he would, he could not get those shares out of his mind; they had entered like iron into his soul, as poison into his blood; they might still rise, they might yet become of vast value, might pay all his debts, and enable him to begin again. And, then, this had been a committee day; he had had no means of

knowing how things had gone there, of learning the opinions of the members, of whispering to Mr. Piles, or hearing the law on the matter laid down by the heavy deep voice of the great Mr. Blocks. And so he went on thinking, thinking, thinking; but ever as though he had a clock-weight fixed to his heart and pulling at its strings. For, after all, what were the shares or the committee to him? let the shares rise to ever so fabulous a value, let the Chancellor of the Exchequer be ever so complaisant in giving away his money, what avail would it be to him? what avail now? He must stand his trial for the crime of which he had been guilty.

With the utmost patience Gertrude endeavoured to soothe him, and to bring his mind into some temper in which it could employ itself. She brought him their baby, thinking that he would play with his child, but all that he said was—"My poor boy. I have ruined him already;" and then turning away from the infant, he thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and went on calculating about the shares.

When the sun had well set, and the daylight had, at last, dwindled out, he took up his hat and wandered out among the new streets and rows of houses, which lay between his own house and the Western Railway. He got into a district in which he had never been before, near, though it was, to his own house. The people who lived there were further off than himself from the

centre of the circle, and therefore he knew nothing of them or their habitations; and as he walked about here, he thought of the fate of other such swindlers as himself;—yes, though he did not speak the word, he pronounced it as plainly, and as often, in the utterance of his mind, as though it was being rung out to him from every steeple in London; he thought of the fate of such swindlers as himself; how one had been found dead in the streets, poisoned by himself; how another, after facing the cleverest lawyers in the land, was now dying in a felon's prison; how a third had vainly endeavoured to fly from justice by aid of wigs, false whiskers, painted furrows, and other disguises. Should he try to escape also, and avoid the ignominy of a trial? He knew it would be in vain; he knew that, at this moment, he was dogged at the distance of some thirty yards by an amiable policeman in mufti, placed to watch his motions by his two kind bailsmen, who preferred this small expense to the risk of losing a thousand pounds a-piece.

As he turned short round a corner, into the main road leading from the railway station to Bayswater, he came close upon a man who was walking quickly in the opposite direction, and found himself face to face with Undy Scott. How on earth should Undy Scott have come out there to Bayswater, at that hour of the night, he, the constant denizen of clubs, the well-known

frequent of Pall Mall, the member for the Tillietudlem burghs, whose every hour was occupied in the looking after things political, or things commercial? Who could have expected him in a back road at Bayswater? There, however, he was, and Alaric; before he knew of his presence, had almost stumbled against him.

“Scott!” said Alaric, starting back.

“Hallo, Tudor, what the deuce brings you here? but I suppose you’ll ask me the same question?” said Undy.

Alaric Tudor could not restrain himself. “You scoundrel,” said he, seizing Undy by the collar; “you utterly unmitigated scoundrel. You pre-meditating wilful villain,” and he held Undy as though he intended to choke him.

But Undy Scott was not a man to be thus roughly handled with impunity; and in completing the education which he had received, the use of his fists had not been overlooked. He let out with his right hand, and struck Alaric twice with considerable force on the side of his jaw, so that the teeth rattled in his mouth.

But Alaric, at the moment, hardly felt it. “You have brought me and mine to ruin,” said he; “you have done it purposely, like a fiend. But low as I have fallen, I would not change places with you for all that the earth holds. I have been a villain; but such villany as yours,—ugh——” and so saying, he flung his enemy from

him, and Undy, tottering back, saved himself against the wall.

In a continued personal contest between the two men, Undy would probably have had the best of it, for he would certainly have been the cooler of the two, and was also the more skilful in such warfare; but he felt in a moment that he could gain nothing by thrashing Tudor, whereas he might damage himself materially by having his name brought forward at the present moment in connection with that of his old friend.

“You reprobate!” said he, preparing to pass on; “it has been my misfortune to know you, and one cannot touch pitch, and not be defiled. But thank God you’ll come by your deserts now. If you will take my advice, you’ll hang yourself;” and so they parted.

The amiable policeman in mufti remained at a convenient distance during this little interview, having no special mission to keep the peace, pending his present employment; but, as he passed by, he peered into Undy’s face, and recognised the honourable member for the Tillietudlem burghs. A really sharp policeman knows every one of any note in London. It might, perhaps, be useful that evidence should be given at the forthcoming trial of the little contest which we have described. If so, our friend in mufti was prepared to give it.

When Alaric got home his jaw was so swollen

with Undy's well-directed blows that he could hardly open his mouth. To Gertrude, when she inquired how he had hurt himself, he would only reply that he had had an accident. She forbore to cross-question him ; and then he went to bed, and then to sleep. Oh ! the luxury of such sleep when one is wretched ; but oh ! the misery of waking from it !

On the following morning, at about eleven, a cab drove up to the door, and Alaric, standing at the dining-room window, saw Mrs. Woodward get out of it.

"There's your mother," said Alaric to his wife. "I will not see her—let her go up to the drawing room."

"Oh ! Alaric, will you not see mama ?"

"How can I, with my face swollen as it is now ? Besides, what would be the good ? What can I say to her ? I know well enough what she has to say to me, without listening to it."

"Dear Alaric, mama will say nothing to you that is not kind ; do see her, for my sake, Alaric."

But misery had not made him docile. He merely turned from her, and shook his head impatiently. Gertrude then ran out to welcome her mother, who was in the hall.

And what a welcoming it was ! "Come up stairs, mama, come into the drawing room," said Gertrude, who would not stop even to kiss her

mother till they found themselves secured from the servants' eyes. She knew that one word of tenderness would bring her to the ground.

"Mama, mama!" she almost shrieked, and throwing herself into her mother's arms wept convulsively. Mrs. Woodward wanted no more words to tell her that Alaric had been guilty.

"But, Gertrude, how much is it?" whispered the mother, as, after a few moments of passionate grief, they sat holding each other's hands on the sofa. "How much money is wanting? Can we not make it up? If it be all paid before the day of trial, will not that do? will not that prevent it?"

Gertrude could not say. She knew that 10,000*l.* had been abstracted. Mrs. Woodward groaned as she heard the sum named. But then there were those shares which had not long since been worth much more than half that sum, which must still be worth a large part of it.

"But we must know, dearest, before Harry can do anything," said Mrs. Woodward.

Gertrude blushed crimson when Harry Norman's name was mentioned. And had it come to that, that they must look to him for aid?

"Can you not ask him, love?" said Mrs. Woodward. "I saw him in the dining-room; go and ask him; when he knows that we are doing our best for him, surely he will help us."

Gertrude, with a heavy heart, went down on her message, and did not return for fifteen or

twenty minutes. It may easily be conceived that Norman's name was not mentioned between her and her husband, but she made him understand that an effort would be made for him, if only the truth could be ascertained.

"It will be of no use," said he.

"Don't say so, Alaric; we cannot tell what may be of use. But at any rate it will be a weight off your heart to know that this money has been paid. It is that which overpowers you now, and not your own misfortune."

At last he suffered her to lead him, and she put down on paper such figures as he dictated to her. It was, however, impossible to say what was the actual deficiency; that must depend upon the present value of the shares; these he said he was prepared to give over to his own attorney, if it was thought that by so doing he should be taking the best steps towards repairing the evil he had done; and then he began calculating how much the shares might possibly be worth, and pointing out under what circumstances they should be sold, and under what again they should be overheld till the market had improved. All this was worse than greek to Gertrude; but she collected what facts she could, and then returned to her mother.

And they discussed the matter with all the wit and all the volubility which women have on such occasions. Paper was brought forth, and

accounts were made out between them, not such as would please the eyes of a Civil Service Examiner, but yet accurate in their way. How they worked and racked their brains, and strained their women's nerves in planning how justice might be defeated, and the dishonesty of the loved one covered from shame! Uncle Bat was ready with his share. He had received such explanation as Mrs. Woodward had been able to give, and though when he first heard the news he had spoken severely of Alaric, still his money should be forthcoming for the service of the family. He could produce some fifteen hundred pounds; and would, if needs be that he should do so. Then Harry—but the pen fell from Gertrude's fingers as she essayed to write down Harry Norman's contribution to the relief of her husband's misery.

“Remember, Gertrude, love, in how short a time he will be your brother.”

“But when will it be, mama? Is it to be on Thursday, as we had planned? Of course, mama, I cannot be there.”

And then there was a break in their accounts, and Mrs. Woodward explained to Gertrude that they had all thought it better to postpone Linda's marriage till after the trial; and this, of course, was the source of fresh grief. When men such as Alaric Tudor stoop to dishonesty, the penalties of detection are not confined to their own hearth-

stone. The higher are the branches of the tree and the wider, the greater will be the extent of earth which its fall will disturb.

Gertrude's pen, however, again went to work. The shares were put down at 5000%. "If they can only be sold for so much, I think we may manage it," said Mrs. Woodward; "I am sure that Harry can get the remainder—indeed he said he could have more than that."

"And what will Linda do?"

"Linda will never want it, love; and if she did, what of that? would she not give all she has for you?"

And then Mrs. Woodward went her way to Norman's office, without having spoken to Alaric. "You will come again soon, mama," said Gertrude. Mrs. Woodward promised that she would. "And mama," and she whispered close into her mother's ear, as she made her next request; "and, mama, you will be with me on that day?"

We need not follow Norman in his efforts to have her full fortune restored to Madame Jaquêt-anàpe. He was daily in connection with Alaric's lawyer, and returned sometimes with hope and sometimes without it. Mrs. Val's lawyer would receive no overtures towards a withdrawal of the charge, or even towards any mitigation in their proceedings, unless the agent coming forward on behalf of the lady's late trustee, did so with the full sum of 20,000% in his hands.

We need not follow Charley, who was every day with Alaric, and who was, unknown to Alaric, an agent between him and Norman. "Well, Charley, what are they doing to-day?" was Alaric's constant question to him, even up to the very eve of his trial.

If any spirit ever walks it must be that of the stockjobber, for how can such a one rest in its grave without knowing what shares are doing?

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST BREAKFAST.

AND that day was not long in coming ; indeed, it came with terrible alacrity ; much too quickly for Gertrude, much too quickly for Norman ; and much too quickly for Alaric's lawyer. To Alaric only did the time pass slowly, for he found himself utterly without employment.

Norman and Uncle Bat between them had raised something about 6000*l.* ; but when the day came on which they were prepared to dispose of the shares, the Limehouse bridge was found to be worth nothing. They were, as the broker had said, ticklish stock ; so ticklish that no one would have them at any price. When Undy, together with his agent from Tillietudlem, went into the market about the same time to dispose of theirs, they were equally unsuccessful. How the agent looked and spoke and felt may be imagined ; for the agent had made large advances, and had no other security ; but Undy had borne such looks and speeches before, and merely said that it was very odd, extremely odd ; he had been greatly deceived by Mr. Piles. Mr. Piles also said it was very odd ; but he did not appear

to be nearly so much annoyed as the agent from Tillietudlem; and it was whispered that, queer as things now looked, Messrs. Blocks, Piles, and Cofferdam, had not made a bad thing of the bridge.

Overture after overture was made to the lawyer employed by Mrs. Val's party. Norman first offered the 6000*l.* and the shares; then when the shares were utterly rejected by the share-buying world, he offered to make himself personally responsible for the remainder of the debt, and to bind himself by bond to pay it within six months. At first these propositions were listened to, and Alaric's friends were led to believe that the matter would be handled in such a way that the prosecution would fall to the ground. But at last all composition was refused. The adverse attorney declared, first, that he was not able to accept any money payment short of the full amount with interest, and then he averred that, as criminal proceedings had been taken they could not now be stayed. Whether or no Alaric's night attack had anything to do with this, whether Undy had been the means of instigating this rigid adherence to justice, we are not prepared to say.

That day for which Gertrude had prayed her mother's assistance, came all too soon. They had become at last aware that the trial must go on. Charley was with them on the last evening, and completed their despair by telling them that

their attorney had resolved to make no further efforts at a compromise.

Perhaps the most painful feeling to Gertrude through the whole of the last fortnight had been the total prostration of her husband's energy, and almost of his intellect; he seemed to have lost the power of judging for himself, and of thinking and deciding what conduct would be best for him in his present condition. He who had been so energetic, so full of life, so ready for all emergencies, so clever at devices, so able to manage not only for himself but for his friends, he was, as it were, paralyzed and unmanned. He sat from morning to night looking at the empty fire-grate, and hardly ventured to speak of the ordeal that he had to undergo.

His lawyer was to call for him on the morning of the trial, and Mrs. Woodward was to be at the house soon after he had left it. He had not yet seen her since the inquiry had commenced, and it was very plain that he did not wish to do so. Mrs. Woodward was to be there and to remain till his fate had been decided, and then——. Not a word had yet been said as to the chance of his not returning; but Mrs. Woodward was aware that he would probably be unable to do so, and felt, that if such should be the case, she could not leave her daughter alone.

And so Alarie and his wife sat down to breakfast on that last morning. She had brought their boy down, but as she perceived that the child's

presence did not please his father, he had been sent back to the nursery, and they were alone. She poured out his tea for him, put bread upon his plate, and then sat down close beside him, endeavouring to persuade him to eat. She had never yet found fault with him, she had never even ventured to give him counsel, but now she longed to entreat him to collect himself and take a man's part in the coming trial. He sat in the seat prepared for him, but, instead of eating, he thrust his hands after his accustomed manner into his pockets and sat glowering at the teacups.

"Come, Alaric, won't you eat your breakfast?" said she.

"No; breakfast! no—how can I eat now? how can you think that I could eat at such a time as this? Do you take yours; never mind me."

"But, dearest, you will be faint if you do not eat; think what you have to go through; remember, how many eyes will be on you to-day."

He shuddered violently as she spoke, and motioned to her with his hand not to go on with what she was saying.

"I know, I know," said she, passionately; "dearest, dearest love, I know how dreadful it is; would that I could bear it for you! would that I could!"

He turned away his head, for a tear was in his eye. It was the first that had come to his assistance since this sorrow had come upon him.

“Don’t turn from me, dearest Alaric ; do not turn from me now at our last moments. To me at least you are the same noble Alaric that you ever were.”

“Noble!” said he, with all the self-scorn which he so truly felt.

“To me you are, now as ever ; but, Alaric, I do so fear that you will want strength, physical strength, you know, to go through all this. I would have you bear yourself like a man before them all.”

“It will be but little matter,” said he.

“It will be matter. It will be matter to me. My darling, darling husband, rouse yourself,” and she knelt before his knees and prayed to him ; “for my sake do it, eat and drink that you may have the power of a man when all the world is looking at you. If God forgives us our sins, surely, we should so carry ourselves that men may not be ashamed to do so.”

He did not answer her, but he turned to the table and broke the bread, and put his lips to the cup. And then she gave him food as she would give it to a child, and he with a child’s obedience ate and drank what was put before him. As he did so, every now and again a single tear forced itself beneath his eyelid and trickled down his face, and in some degree Gertrude was comforted.

He had hardly finished his enforced breakfast when the cab and the lawyer came to the door. The learned gentleman had the good taste not to

come in, and so the servant told them that Mr. Gitemthruet was there.

"Say, that your master will be with him in a minute," said Gertrude, quite coolly; and then the room door was again closed, and the husband and wife had now to say adieu.

Alaric rose from his chair and made a faint attempt to smile. "Well, Gertrude," said he, "it has come at last."

She rushed into his embrace, and throwing her arms around him, buried her face upon his breast. "Alaric, Alaric, my husband; my love, my best, my own, my only love."

"I cannot say much now, Gertrude, but I know how good you are; you will come and see me, if they will let you, won't you?"

"See you!" said she, starting back, but still holding him and looking up earnestly into his face. "See you!" and then she poured out her love with all the passion of a Ruth: "'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; * * * * * Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.' See you, Alaric! oh, it cannot be that they will hinder the wife from being with her husband."

"But, Alaric," she went on, "do not droop now, love---will you?"

"I cannot brazen it out," said he. "I know too well what it is that I have done."

"No, not that, Alaric; I would not have that. But, remember, all is not over, whatever they may do. Ah, how little will really be over, whatever they can do. You have repented, have you not, Alaric?"

"I think so, I hope so," said Alaric, with his eyes upon the ground.

"You have repented, and are right before God; do not fear then what man can do to you. I would not have you brazen, Alaric; but be manly, be collected, be your own self, the man that I have loved, the man that I do now love so well, better, better than ever;" and she threw herself on him and kissed him and clung to him, and stroked his hair and put her hand upon his face, and then holding him from her, looked up to him as though he were a hero whom she all but worshipped.

"Gertrude, Gertrude—that I should have brought you to this!"

"Never mind," said she; "we will win through it yet—we will yet be happy together far, far away from here—remember that—let that support you through all. And now, Alaric, you will come up for one moment and kiss him before you go."

"The man will be impatient."

"Never mind; let him be impatient—you shall not go away without blessing your boy;—come up, Alaric."—And she took him by the hand and led him like a child into the nursery.

“Where is he, nurse? bring him here—Papa is going away—Alley, boy, give papa a big kiss.”

Alaric, for the first time for the fortnight, took the little fellow into his arms and kissed him. “God bless you, my bairn,” said he, “and grant that all this may never be visited against you, here or hereafter.”

“And now go,” said Gertrude, as they descended the stairs together, “and may God in his mercy watch over and protect you and give you back to me. And, Alaric, wherever you are I will be close to you, remember that—I will be quite, quite close to you. Now, one kiss—oh, dearest, dearest Alaric—there—there—and now go.” And so he went, and Gertrude shutting herself into her room threw herself on to the bed, and wept aloud.

She threw herself on to her bed and there her mother found her. “Oh, mama—dear mama, this is so good of you, so very good—I am better than I was, mama; better than I hoped to be—but oh, mama, for his sake, would that this day was done.”

CHAPTER XI.

MR. CHAFFANBRASS.

WE must now follow Alaric to his trial. He was of course much too soon at court. All people always are, who are brought to the court perforce, criminals for instance, and witnesses, and other such like unfortunate wretches; whereas many of those who only go there to earn their bread are very often as much too late. He was to be tried at the Old Bailey. As I have never seen the place, and as so many others have seen it, I will not attempt to describe it. Here Mr. Gitemthruet was quite at home; he hustled and jostled, elbowed and ordered, as though he were the second great man of the place, and the client whom he was to defend was the first. In this latter opinion he was certainly right. Alaric was the hero of the day, and people made way for him as though he had won a victory in India, and was going to receive the freedom of the city in a box. As he passed by, a gleam of light fell on him from a window, and at the instant three different artists had him photographed, daguerre-typed, and bedevilled; four graphic members of the public press took down the details of his hat,

whiskers, coat, trousers, and boots; and the sub-editor of the "Daily Delight" observed, that "there was a slight tremor in the first footstep which he took within the precincts of the prison, but in every other respect his demeanour was dignified and his presence manly; he had light brown gloves, one of which was on his left hand, but the other was allowed to swing from his fingers. The court was extremely crowded, and some fair ladies appeared there to grace its customarily ungracious walls. On the bench we observed Lord Killtime, Sir Gregory Hardlines, and Mr. Whip Vigil. Mr. Undecimus Scott, who has been summoned as a witness by the prisoner, was also accommodated by the sheriffs with a seat." Such was the opening paragraph of the seven columns which were devoted by the "Daily Delight" to the all-absorbing subject.

But Mr. Gitemthruet made his way through artists, reporters, and the agitated crowd with that happy air of command which can so easily be assumed by men at a moment's notice, when they feel themselves to be for that moment of importance. "Come this way, Mr. Tudor; follow me and we will get on without any trouble; just follow me close," said Mr. Gitemthruet to his client, in a whisper which was audible to not a few. Tudor, who was assaying, and not altogether unsuccessfully, to bear the public gaze undismayed, did as he was bid, and followed Mr. Gitemthruet.

“Now,” said the attorney, “we’ll sit here—Mr. Chaffanbrass will be close to us, there, so that I can touch him up as we go along; of course, you know, you can make any suggestion, only you must do it through me. Here’s his Lordship; uncommon well he looks, don’t he; you’d hardly believe him to be seventy-seven, but he’s not a day less, if he isn’t any more; and he has as much work in him yet as you or I, pretty nearly. If you want to insure a man’s life, Mr. Tudor, put him on the bench; then he’ll never die. We lawyers are not like bishops, who are always for giving up, and going out on a pension.”

But Alaric was not at the moment inclined to meditate much on the long years of judges. He was thinking, or perhaps trying to think, whether it would not be better for him to save this crowd that was now gathered together all further trouble, and plead guilty at once. He knew he was guilty, he could not understand that it was possible that any juryman should have a doubt about it; he had taken the money that did not belong to him; that would be made quite clear; he had taken it, and had not repaid it; there was the absolute *corpus delicti* in court, in the shape of a deficiency of some thousands of pounds. What possible doubt would there be in the breast of any one as to his guilt? Why should he vex his own soul by making himself for a livelong day a gazing-stock for the multitude? Why should

he trouble all those wigged counsellors, when one word from him would set it all at rest?

“Mr. Gitemthruet, I think I’ll plead guilty,” said he.

“Plead what!” said Mr. Gitemthruet, turning round upon his client, with a sharp angry look. It was the first time that his attorney had shown any sign of disgust, displeasure, or even disapprobation since he had taken Alaric’s matter in hand. “Plead what !Ah, you’re joking, I know; upon my soul you gave me a start.”

Alaric endeavoured to explain to him that he was not joking, nor in a mood to joke; but that he really thought the least vexatious course would be for him to plead guilty.

“Then I tell you it would be the most vexatious proceeding that ever I heard of in all my practice. But you are in my hands, Mr. Tudor, and you can’t do it. You have done me the honour to come to me, and now you must be ruled by me. Plead guilty! Why, with such a case as you have got, you would disgrace yourself for ever if you did so. Think of your friends, Mr. Tudor, if you won’t think of me or of yourself.”

His lawyer’s eloquence converted him, and he resolved that he would run his chance. During this time all manner of little legal preliminaries had been going on; and now the court was ready for business; the jury were in their box, the court-keeper cried silence, and Mr. Gitemthruet

was busy among his papers with frantic energy. But nothing was yet seen of the great Mr. Chaffanbrass.

"I believe we may go on with the trial for breach of trust," said the judge. "I do not know why we are waiting."

Then up and spoke Mr. Younglad, who was Alaric's junior counsel. Mr. Younglad was a promising common-law barrister, now commencing his career, of whom his friends were beginning to hope that he might, if he kept his shoulders well to the collar, at some distant period, make a living out of his profession. He was between forty and forty-five years of age, and had already overcome the natural diffidence of youth in addressing a learned bench and a crowded court.

"My lud," said Younglad, "my learned friend, Mr. Chaffanbrass, who leads for the prisoner, is not yet in court. Perhaps, my lud, on behalf of my client I may ask for a few moments' delay."

"And if Mr. Chaffanbrass has undertaken to lead for the prisoner, why is he not in court?" said the judge, looking as though he had uttered a poser which must altogether settle Mr. Younglad's business.

But Mr. Younglad had not been sitting and walking, and listening, let alone talking occasionally, in criminal courts for the last twenty years, to be settled so easily.

"My lud, if your ludship will indulge me with

five minutes' delay—we will not ask more than five minutes—your ludship knows, no one better, the very onerous duties.”

“When I was at the bar I took no briefs to which I could not attend,” said the judge.

“I am sure you did not, my lud; and my learned friend, should he ever sit in your ludship's seat, will be able to say as much for himself, when at some future time he may be—; but, my lud, Mr. Chaffanbrass is now in court.” And as he spoke, Mr. Chaffanbrass, carrying in his hand a huge old blue bag, which as he entered he took from his clerk's hands, and bearing on the top of his head a wig that apparently had not received an ounce of powder for the last ten years, made his way in among the barristers, caring little on whose toes he trod, whose papers he upset, or whom he elbowed on his road. Mr. Chaffanbrass was the cock of this dunghill, and well he knew how to make his crowing heard there.

“And now pray let us lose no more time,” said the judge.

“My lord, if time has been lost through me, I am very sorry; but if your lordship's horse had fallen down in the street as mine did just now——”

“My horse never falls down in the street, Mr. Chaffanbrass.”

“Some beasts, my lord, can always keep their legs under them, and others can't; and men are pretty much in the same condition. I hope the

former may be the case with your lordship and your lordship's cob for many years." The judge, knowing of old that nothing could prevent Mr. Chaffanbrass from having the last word, now held his peace, and the trial began.

There are not now too many pages left to us for the completion of our tale; but, nevertheless, we must say a few words about Mr. Chaffanbrass. He was one of an order of barristers by no means yet extinct, but of whom it may be said that their peculiarities are somewhat less often seen than they were when Mr. Chaffanbrass was in his prime. He confined his practice almost entirely to one class of work, the defence namely of culprits arraigned for heavy crimes, and in this he was, if not unrivalled, at least unequalled. Rivals he had, who, thick as the skins of such men may be presumed to be, not unfrequently writhed beneath the lashes which his tongue could inflict. To such a perfection had he carried his skill and power of fence, so certain was he in attack, so invulnerable when attacked, that few men cared to come within the reach of his forensic flail. To the old stagers who were generally opposed to him, the gentlemen who conducted prosecutions on the part of the crown, and customarily spent their time and skill in trying to hang those marauders on the public safety whom it was the special business of Mr. Chaffanbrass to preserve unhung, to these he was, if not civil, at least forbearing; but when any barrister, who was

comparatively a stranger to him, ventured to oppose him, there was no measure to his impudent sarcasm and offensive sneers.

Those, however, who most dreaded Mr. Chaffanbrass, and who had most occasion to do so, were the witnesses. A rival lawyer could find a protection on the bench when his powers of endurance were tried too far; but a witness in a court of law has no protection. He comes there unfeed, without hope of guerdon, to give such assistance to the state in repressing crime and assisting justice as his knowledge in this particular case may enable him to afford; and justice, in order to ascertain whether his testimony be true, finds it necessary to subject him to torture. One would naturally imagine that an undisturbed thread of clear evidence would be best obtained from a man whose position was made easy and whose mind was not harassed; but this is not the fact; to turn a witness to good account he must be badgered this way and that till he is nearly mad; he must be made a laughing-stock for the court; his very truths must be turned into falsehoods, so that he may be falsely shamed; he must be accused of all manner of villany, threatened with all manner of punishment; he must be made to feel that he has no friend near him, that the world is all against him; he must be confounded till he forget his right hand from his left, till his mind be turned into chaos, and his heart into water; and then let him give his

evidence. What will fall from his lips when in this wretched collapse must be of special value ; for the best talents of practised forensic heroes are daily used to bring it about, and no member of the Humane Society interferes to protect the wretch. Some sorts of torture are as it were tacitly allowed even among humane people. Eels are skinned alive, and witnesses are sacrificed, and no one's blood curdles at the sight, no soft heart is sickened by the cruelty.

To apply the thumbscrew, the boots, and the rack to the victim before him was the work of Mr. Chaffanbrass's life. And it may be said of him that the labour he delighted in physicked pain. He was as little averse to this toil as the cat is to that of catching mice. And, indeed, he was not unlike a cat in his method of proceeding ; for he would, as it were, hold his prey for a while between his paws, and pat him with gentle taps before he tore him. He would ask a few civil little questions in his softest voice, glaring out of his wicked old eye as he did so at those around him, and then, when he had his mouse well in hand, out would come his envenomed claw, and the wretched animal would feel the fatal wound in his tenderest part.

Mankind in general takes pleasure in cruelty, though those who are civilized abstain from it on principle. On the whole Mr. Chaffanbrass is popular at the Old Bailey. Men congregate to hear him turn a witness inside out, and chuckle

with an inward pleasure at the success of his cruelty. This Mr. Chaffanbrass knows, and like an actor who is kept up to his high mark by the necessity of maintaining his character, he never allows himself to grow dull over his work. Therefore Mr. Chaffanbrass bullies when it is quite unnecessary that he should bully; it is a labour of love; and though he is now old, and stiff in his joints, though ease would be dear to him, though like a gladiator satiated with blood, he would as regards himself be pleased to sheath his sword, yet he never spares himself. He never spares himself, and he never spares his victim.

As a lawyer in the broad and high sense of the word, it may be presumed that Mr. Chaffanbrass knows little or nothing. He has, indeed, no occasion for such knowledge. His business is to perplex a witness and bamboozle a jury, and in doing that he is generally successful. He seldom cares for carrying the judge with him; such tactics, indeed, as his, are not likely to tell upon a judge. That which he loves is, that a judge should charge against him, and a jury give a verdict in his favour. When he achieves that, he feels that he has earned his money. Let others, the younglads and spooneys of his profession, undertake the milk-and-water work of defending injured innocence; it is all but an insult to his practised ingenuity to invite his assistance to such tasteless business. Give him a case in which he has all the world against him; Justice

with her sword raised high to strike ; Truth with open mouth and speaking eyes to tell the bloody tale ; outraged humanity shrieking for punishment ; a case from which Mercy herself, with averted eyes, has loathing turned and bade her sterner sister do her work ; give him such a case as this, and then you will see Mr. Chaffanbrass in his glory. Let him, by the use of his high art, rescue from the gallows and turn loose upon the world the wretch whose hands are reeking with the blood of father, mother, wife, and brother, and you may see Mr. Chaffanbrass, elated with conscious worth, rub his happy hands with infinite complacency. Then will his ambition be satisfied, and he will feel that in the verdict of the jury he has received the honour due to his genius. He will have succeeded in turning black into white, in washing the blackamore, in dressing in the fair robe of innocence the foulest, filthiest wretch of his day ; and as he returns to his home, he will be proudly conscious that he is no little man.

In person, however, Mr. Chaffanbrass is a little man, and a very dirty little man. He has all manner of nasty tricks about him, which make him a disagreeable neighbour to barristers sitting near to him. He is profuse with snuff, and very generous with his handkerchief. He is always at work upon his teeth, which do not do much credit to his industry. His wig is never at ease upon his head, but is poked about by him, some-

times over one ear, sometimes over the other, now on the back of his head, and then on his nose; and it is impossible to say in which guise he looks most cruel, most sharp, and most intolerable. His linen is never clean, his hands never washed, and his clothes apparently never new. He is about five feet six in height, and even with that stoops greatly. His custom is to lean forward, resting with both hands on the sort of desk before him, and then to fix his small brown basilisk eye on the victim in the box before him. In this position he will remain unmoved by the hour together, unless the elevation and fall of his thick eyebrows and the partial closing of his wicked eyes can be called motion. But his tongue!—that moves; there is the weapon which he knows how to use! There is no power like the gift of the gab, said George Stephenson. There is certainly no curse so powerful when it is used after the fashion of Mr. Chaffanbrass.

Such is Mr. Chaffanbrass in public life; and those who only know him in public life can hardly believe that at home is he one of the most easy, good-tempered, amiable old gentlemen that ever was pooh-poohed by his grown-up daughters, and occasionally told to keep himself quiet in a corner. Such, however, is his private character. Not that he is a fool in his own house; Mr. Chaffanbrass can never be a fool; but he is so essentially good-natured, so devoid of any feeling of domestic tyranny, so placid in his domesticities,

that he chooses to be ruled by his own children. But in his own way he is fond of hospitality ; he delights in a cosy glass of old port with an old friend in whose company he may be allowed to sit in his old coat and old slippers. He delights also in his books, in his daughter's music, and in three or four live pets, dogs, and birds, and squirrels, whom morning and night he feeds with his own hands. He is charitable, too, and subscribes largely to hospitals founded for the relief of the suffering poor.

Such was Mr. Chaffanbrass, who had been selected by the astute Mr. Gitemthruet to act as leading counsel on behalf of Alaric. If any human wisdom could effect the escape of a client in such jeopardy, the wisdom of Mr. Chaffanbrass would be likely to do it ; but, in truth, the evidence was so strong against him that even this Newgate hero almost feared the result.

I will not try the patience of any one by stating in detail all the circumstances of the trial. In doing so, I should only copy, or, at any rate, might copy, the proceedings at some of those modern *causes célèbres* with which all those who love such subjects are familiar. And why should I force such matters on those who do not love them ? The usual opening speech was made by the chief man on the prosecuting side, who, in the usual manner, declared "that his only object was justice ; that his heart bled within him to see a man of such acknowledged public utility

as Mr. Tudor in such a position ; that he sincerely hoped that the jury might find it possible to acquit him, but that——” And then he went into his “but” with so much venom that it was clearly discernible to all, that in spite of his protestations, his heart was set upon a conviction.

When he had finished, the witnesses for the prosecution were called,—the poor wretches whose fate it was to be impaled alive that day by Mr. Chaffanbrass. They gave their evidence, and in due course were impaled. Mr. Chaffanbrass had never been greater. The day was hot, and he thrust his wig back till it stuck rather on the top of his coat collar than on his head ; his forehead seemed to come out like the head of a dog from his kennel, and he grinned with his black teeth, and his savage eyes twinkled, till the witnesses sank almost out of sight as they gazed at him.

And yet they had very little to prove, and nothing that he could disprove. They had to speak merely to certain banking transactions, to say that certain moneys had been so paid in and so drawn out, in stating which they had their office books to depend on. But not the less on this account were they made victims. To one clerk it was suggested that he might now and then, once in three months or so, make an error in a figure ; and, having acknowledged this, he was driven about till he admitted that it was very possible that every entry he made in the bank books in the course of the year was false. “And

you, such as you," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, "do you dare to come forward to give evidence on commercial affairs? Go down, sir, and hide your ignominy?" The wretch, convinced that he was ruined for ever, slunk out of court, and was ashamed to show himself at his place of business for the next three days.

There were ten or twelve witnesses, all much of the same sort, who proved among them that this sum of twenty thousand pounds had been placed at Alaric's disposal, and that now, alas! the twenty thousand pounds were not forthcoming. It seemed to be a very simple case; and, to Alaric's own understanding, it seemed impossible that his counsel should do anything for him. But as each impaled victim shrunk with agonized terror from the torture, Mr. Gitemthruet would turn round to Alaric and assure him that they were going on well, quite as well as he had expected. 'Mr. Chaffanbrass was really exerting himself; and when Mr. Chaffanbrass did really, exert himself he rarely failed.

And so the long day faded itself away in the hot sweltering court, and his lordship, at about seven o'clock, declared his intention of adjourning. Of course a *cause célèbre* such as this was not going to decide itself in one day. Alaric's guilt was clear as daylight to all concerned; but a man who had risen to be a Civil Service Commissioner, and to be entrusted with the guardianship of twenty thousand pounds, was not to be

treated like a butcher who had merely smothered his wife in an ordinary way, or a housebreaker who had followed his professional career to its natural end ; more than that was due to the rank and station of the man, and to the very respectable retaining fee with which Mr. Gitemthruet had found himself enabled to secure the venom of Mr. Chaffanbrass. So the jury retired to regale themselves *en masse* at a neighbouring coffee-house ; Alaric was again permitted to be at large on bail (the amiable policeman in mufti still attending him at a distance) ; and Mr. Chaffanbrass and his lordship retired to prepare themselves by rest for the morrow's labours.

But what was Alaric to do ? He soon found himself under the guardianship of the constant Gitemthruet in a neighbouring tavern, and his cousin Charley was with him. Charley had been in court the whole day, except that he had twice posted down to the West^d End in a cab to let Gertrude and Mrs. Woodward know how things were going on. He had posted down and posted back again, and, crowded as the court had been, he had contrived to make his way in, using that air of authority to which the strongest-minded policeman will always bow ; till at last the very policeman assisted him, as though he were in some way connected with the trial.

On his last visit at Gertrude's house he had told her that it was very improbable that the trial should be finished that day. She had then

said nothing as to Alaric's return to his own house; it had indeed not occurred to her that he would be at liberty to do so; Charley at once caught at this, and strongly recommended his cousin to remain where he was. "You will gain nothing by going home," said he; "Gertrude does not expect you; Mrs. Woodward is there; and it will be better for all parties that you should remain." Mr. Gitemthruet strongly backed his advice, and Alaric, so counselled, resolved to remain where he was. Charley promised to stay with him, and the policeman in mufti, without making any promise at all, silently acquiesced in the arrangement. Charley made one more visit to the West, saw Norman at his lodgings, and Mrs. Woodward and Gertrude in Albany Place, and then returned to make a night of it with Alaric. We need hardly say that Charley made a night of it in a very different manner from that to which he and his brother navvies were so well accustomed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OLD BAILEY.

THE next morning, at ten o'clock, the court was again crowded. The judge was again on his bench, prepared for patient endurance; and Lord Killtime and Sir Gregory Hardlines were alongside of him. The jury were again in their box, ready with pen and paper to give their brightest attention, a brightness which will be dim enough before the long day be over; the counsel for the prosecution were rummaging among their papers; the witnesses for the defence were sitting there among the attorneys, with the exception of the Honourable Undecimus Scott, who was accommodated with a seat near the sheriff, and whose heart, to tell the truth, was sinking somewhat low within his breast in spite of the glass of brandy with which he had fortified himself; Alaric was again present, under the wings of Mr. Gitemthruet; and the great Mr. Chaffanbrass was in his place. He was leaning over a slip of paper which he held in his hand, and with compressed lips was meditating his attack upon his enemies; on this occasion his wig was well over his eyes, and as he peered up from under it to the judge's face, he cocked his nose with an air

of supercilious contempt for all those who were immediately around him.

It was for him to begin the day's sport by making a speech, not so much in defence of his client as in accusation of the prosecutors.—“It had never,” he said, “been his fate, he might say his misfortune, to hear a case against a man in a respectable position, opened by the Crown with such an amount of envenomed virulence.”—He was then reminded that the prosecution was not carried on by the Crown.—“Then,” said he, “we may attribute this virulence to private malice; that it is not to be attributed to any fear that this English bride should lose her fortune, or that her French husband should be deprived of any portion of his spoil, I shall be able to prove to a certainty. Did I allow myself that audacity of denunciation which my learned friend has not considered incompatible with the dignity of his new silk gown; could I permit myself such latitude of invective as he has adopted”—a slight laugh was here heard in the court, and an involuntary smile played across the judge's face—“Yes,” continued Mr. Chaffanbrass, “I boldly aver that I have never forgotten myself and what is due to humanity, as my learned friend did in his address to the jury. Gentlemen of the jury, you will not confound the natural indignation which counsel must feel when defending innocence from the false attacks, with the uncalled for, the unprofessional acerbity which has now

been used in promoting such an accusation as this. I may at times be angry, when I see mean falsehood before me in vain assuming the garb of truth—for with such juries as I meet here it generally is in vain—I may at times forget myself in anger; but, if we talk of venom, virulence, and eager hostility, I yield the palm, without a contest, to my learned friend in the new silk gown.”

He then went on to dispose of the witnesses whom they had heard on the previous day, and expressed a regret that an *exposé* should have been made so disgraceful to the commercial establishments of this great commercial city. It only showed what was the effect on such establishments of that undue parsimony which was now one of the crying evils of the times. Having thus shortly disposed of them, he came to what all men knew was the real interest of the day's doings. “But,” said he, “the evidence in this case, to which your attention will be chiefly directed, will be, not that for the accusation but that for the defence. It will be my business to show to you, not only that my client is guiltless, but to what temptations to be guilty he has been purposely and wickedly subjected. I shall put into that chair an honourable member of the House of Commons, who will make some revelations as to his own life, who will give us an insight into the ways and means of a legislator, which will probably surprise us all, not excluding his lordship on the bench. He will be able to

explain to us—and I trust I may be able to induce him to do so, for it is possible that he may be a little coy—he will be able to explain to us why my client, who is in no way connected either with the Scotts, or the Golightlys, or the Figgs, or the Jaquêtanàpes, why he was made the lady's trustee; and he will also, perhaps, tell us, after some slight gentle persuasion, whether he has himself handled, or attempted to handle, any of this lady's money."

Mr. Chaffanbrass then went on to state that, as the forms of the court would not give him the power of addressing the jury again, he must now explain to them what he conceived to be the facts of the case. He then admitted that his client, in his anxiety to do the best he could with the fortune entrusted to him, had invested it badly. The present fate of these unfortunate bridge shares, as to which the commercial world had lately held so many different opinions, proved that; but it had nevertheless been a *bonâ fide* investment, made in conjunction with, and by the advice of, Mr. Scott, the lady's uncle, who thus, for his own purposes, got possession of money which was in truth confided to him for other purposes. His client, Mr. Chaffanbrass acknowledged, had behaved with great indiscretion; but the moment he found that the investment would be an injurious one to the lady whose welfare was in his hands, he at once resolved to make good the whole amount from his own pocket.

That he had done so, or, at any rate, would have done so, but for this trial, would be proved to them. Nobler conduct than this it was impossible to imagine. Whereas, the lady's uncle, the honourable member of Parliament, the gentleman who had made a stalking horse of his, Mr. Chaffanbrass' client, refused to refund a penny of the spoil, and was now the instigator of this most unjust proceeding.

As Mr. Chaffanbrass thus finished his oration, Undy Scott tried to smile complacently on those around him. But why did the big drops of sweat stand on his brow as his eye involuntarily caught those of Mr. Chaffanbrass? Why did he shuffle his feet, and uneasily move his hands and feet hither and thither, as a man does when he tries in vain to be unconcerned? Why did he pull his gloves on and off, and throw himself back with that affected air which is so unusual to him? All the court was looking at him, and every one knew that he was wretched. Wretched! ay indeed he was; for the assurance even of an Undy Scott, the hardened man of the clubs, the thrice elected and twice rejected of Tillietudlem, fell prostrate before the well known hot pincers of Chaffanbrass, the torturer!

The first witness called was Henry Norman. Alaric looked up for a moment with surprise, and then averted his eyes. Mr. Gitemthruet had concealed from him the fact that Norman was to be called. He merely proved this, that having

heard from Mrs. Woodward, who was the prisoner's mother-in-law, and would soon be his own mother-in-law, that a deficiency had been alleged to exist in the fortune of Madame Jaquêt-anàpe, he had, on the part of Mrs. Woodward, produced what he believed would cover this deficiency, and that when he had been informed that more money was wanting, he had offered to give security that the whole should be paid in six months. Of course, on him Mr. Chaffanbrass exercised none of his terrible skill, and as the lawyers on the other side declined to cross-examine him, he was soon able to leave the court. This he did speedily, for he had no desire to witness Alaric's misery.

And then the Honourable Undecimus Scott was put into the witness-box. It was suggested, on his behalf, that he might give his evidence from the seat which he then occupied, but this Mr. Chaffanbrass would by no means allow. His intercourse with Mr. Scott, he said, must be of a nearer, closer, and more confidential nature than such an arrangement as that would admit. A witness, to his way of thinking, was never an efficient witness till he had his arm on the rail of a witness-box. He must trouble Mr. Scott to descend from the grandeur of his present position; he might return to his seat after he had been examined—if he then should have a mind to do so. Our friend Undy found that he had to obey, and he was soon confronted with Mr.

Chaffanbrass in the humbler manner which that gentleman thought so desirable.

"You are a member of the House of Commons, I believe, Mr. Scott," began Mr. Chaffanbrass.

Undy acknowledged that he was so.

"And you are the son of a peer, I believe?"

"A Scotch peer," said Undy.

"Oh, a Scotch peer," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, bringing his wig forward over his left eye in a manner that was almost irresistible—"a Scotch peer—a member of Parliament, and son of a Scotch peer; and you have been a member of the Government, I believe, Mr. Scott?"

Undy confessed that he had been in office for a short time.

"A member of Parliament, a son of a peer, and one of the Government of this great and free country. You ought to be a proud and a happy man; you are a man of fortune, too, I believe, Mr. Scott?"

"That is a matter of opinion," said Undy; "different people have different ideas. I don't know what you call fortune."

"Why, I call 20,000*l.* a fortune—this sum that the lady had who married the Frenchman. Have you 20,000*l.*?"

"I shall not answer that question."

"Have you 10,000*l.*? You surely must have as much as that, as I know you married a fortune yourself—unless, indeed, a false-hearted trustee

has got hold of your money also. Come, have you got 10,000*l.*?"

"I shall not answer you."

"Have you got any income at all? Now, I demand an answer to that on your oath, sir."

"My lord, must I answer such questions?" said Undy.

"Yes, sir; you must answer them, and many more like them," said Mr. Chaffanbrass. "My lord, it is essential to my client that I could prove to the jury whether this witness is or is not a penniless adventurer; if he be a respectable member of society, he can have no objection to let me know whether he has the means of living."

"Perhaps, Mr. Scott," said the judge, "you will not object to state whether or no you possess any fixed income."

"Have you, or have you not, got an income on which you live?" demanded Mr. Chaffanbrass.

"I have an income," said Undy, not, however, in a voice that betokened much self-confidence in the strength of his own answer.

"You have an income, have you? And now, Mr. Scott, will you tell us what profession you follow at this moment with the object of increasing your income? I think we may surmise, by the tone of your voice, that your income is not very abundant."

"I have no profession," said Undy.

"On your oath, you are in no profession?"

“Not at present.”

“On your oath, you are not a stockjobber?”

Undy hesitated for a moment.

“By the virtue of your oath, sir, are you a stockjobber, or are you not?”

“No, I am not. At least, I believe not.”

“You believe not!” said Mr. Chaffanbrass—and it would have been necessary to hear the tone in which this was said to understand the derision which was implied. “You believe you are not a stockjobber! Are you, or are you not, constantly buying shares and selling shares—railway shares—bridge shares—mining shares—and such like?”

“I sometimes buy shares.”

“And sometimes sell them?”

“Yes—and sometimes sell them.”

Where Mr. Chaffanbrass had got his exact information, we cannot say; but very exact information he had acquired respecting Undy's little transactions. He questioned him about the Mary Janes and Old Friendships, about the West Corks and the Ballydehob Branch, about sundry other railways and canals, and finally about the Limehouse Bridge; and then again he asked his former question. “And now,” said he, “will you tell the jury whether you are a stockjobber or no?”

“It is all a matter of opinion,” said Undy.

“Perhaps I may be, in your sense of the word.”

“My sense of the word!” said Mr. Chaffan-

brass. "You are as much a stockjobber, sir, as that man is a policeman, or his lordship is a judge. And now, Mr. Scott, I am sorry that I must go back to your private affairs, respecting which you are so unwilling to speak. I fear I must trouble you to tell me this—How did you raise the money with which you bought that latter batch—the large lump of the bridge shares—of which we were speaking?"

"I borrowed it from Mr. Tudor," said Undy, who had prepared himself to answer this question, glibly.

"You borrowed it from Mr. Alarie Tudor—that is, from the gentleman now upon his trial. You borrowed it, I believe, just at the time that he became the lady's trustee?"

"Yes," said Undy; "I did so."

"You have not repaid him as yet?"

"No—not yet," said Undy.

"I thought not. Can you at all say when Mr. Tudor may probably get his money?"

"I am not at present prepared to name a day. When the money was lent, it was not intended that it should be repaid at an early day."

"Oh! Mr. Tudor did not want his money at an early day—didn't he? But, nevertheless, he has, I believe, asked for it since, and that very pressingly?"

"He has never asked for it," said Undy.

"Allow me to remind you, Mr. Scott, that I

have the power of putting my client into that witness box, although he is on his trial; and, having so reminded you, let me again beg you to say whether he has not asked you for repayment of this large sum of money very pressingly."

"No; he has never done so."

"By the value of your oath, sir—if it has any value—did not my client beseech you to allow these shares to be sold while they were yet saleable, in order that your niece's trust money might be replaced in the English funds?"

"He said something as to the expediency of selling them, and I differed with him."

"You thought it would be better for the lady's interest that they should remain unsold?"

"I made no question of the lady's interest. I was not her trustee."

"But the shares were bought with the lady's money."

"What shares?" asked Undy.

"What shares, sir! Those shares which you had professed to hold on the lady's behalf, and which afterwards you did not scruple to call your own; those shares of yours—since you have the deliberate dishonesty so to call them—those shares of yours; were they not bought with the lady's money?"

"They were bought with the money which I borrowed from Mr. Tudor."

“And where did Mr. Tudor get that money?”

“That is a question you must ask himself,” said Undy.

“It is a question, sir, that just at present I prefer to ask you. Now, sir, be good enough to tell the jury whence Mr. Tudor got that money; or tell them, if you dare do so, that you do not know.”

Undy for a minute remained silent, and Mr. Chaffanbrass remained silent also. But if the fury of his tongue for a moment was at rest, that of his eyes was as active as ever. He kept his gaze steadily fixed upon the witness, and stood there with compressed lips, still resting on his two hands, as though he were quite satisfied thus to watch the prey that was in his power. For an instant he glanced up to the jury, and then allowed his eyes to resettle on the face of the witness, as though he might have said, “There, gentlemen, there he is—the son of a peer, a member of Parliament; what do you think of him?”

The silence of that minute was horrible to Undy, and yet he could hardly bring himself to break it. The judge looked at him with eyes which seemed to read his inmost soul; the jury looked at him, condemning him one and all; Alaric looked at him with fierce, glaring eyes of hatred, the same eyes that had glared at him that night when he had been collared in the street; the whole crowd looked at him derisively;

but the eyes of them all were as nothing to the eyes of Mr. Chaffanbrass.

"I never saw him so great; I never did," said Mr. Gitemthruet, whispering to his client; and Alaric, even he felt some consolation in the terrible discomfiture of his enemy.

"I don't know where he got it," said Undy, at last breaking the terrible silence, and wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"Oh, you don't!" said Mr. Chaffanbrass, knocking his wig back, and coming well out of his kennel. "After waiting for a quarter of an hour or so, you are able to tell the jury at last that you don't know anything about it. He took the small trifle of change out of his pocket, I suppose?"

"I don't know where he took it from."

"And you didn't ask?"

"No."

"You got the money; that was all you know. But this was just at the time that Mr. Tudor became the lady's trustee; I think you have admitted that."

"It may have been about the time."

"Yes; it may have been about the time, as you justly observe, Mr. Scott. Luckily, you know, we have the dates of the two transactions. But it never occurred to your innocent mind that the money which you got into your hands was a part of the lady's fortune; that never occurred to your innocent mind—eh, Mr. Scott?"

“I don’t know that my mind is a more innocent mind than your own,” said Undy.

“I dare say not. Well, did the idea ever occur to your guilty mind?”

“Perhaps my mind is not more guilty than your own, either.”

“Then may God help me,” said Mr. Chaffanbrass, “for I must be at a bad pass. You told us just now, Mr. Scott, that some time since Mr. Tudor advised you to sell these shares—what made him give you this advice?”

“He meant, he said, to sell his own.”

“And he pressed you to sell yours?”

“Yes.”

“He urged you to do so more than once?”

“Yes; I believe he did.”

“And now, Mr. Scott, can you explain to the jury why he was so solicitous that you should dispose of your property?”

“I do not know why he should have done so, unless he wanted back his own money.”

“Then he did ask for his own money?”

“No; he never asked for it. But if I had sold the shares, perhaps he might have asked for it.”

“Oh!” said Mr. Chaffanbrass; and as he uttered the monosyllable, he looked up at the jury, and gently shook his head, and gently shook his hands. Mr. Chaffanbrass was famous for these little silent addresses to the jury-box.

But not even yet had he done with this sus-

picious loan. We cannot follow him through the whole of his examination; for he kept our old friend under the harrow for no less than seven hours. Though he himself made no further statement to the jury, he made it perfectly plain, by Undy's own extracted admissions, or by the hesitation of his denials, that he had knowingly received this money out of his niece's fortune, and that he had refused to sell the shares bought with this money, when pressed to do so by Tudor, in order that the trust-money might be again made up.

There were those who blamed Mr. Chaffanbrass for thus admitting that his client had made away with his ward's money, by lending it to Undy; but that acute gentleman saw clearly that he could not contend against the fact of the property having been fraudulently used; but he saw that he might induce the jury to attach so much guilt to Undy, that Tudor would, as it were, be whitened by the blackness of the other's villany. The judge, he well knew, would blow aside all this froth; but then the judge could not find the verdict.

Towards the end of the day, when Undy was thoroughly worn out—at which time, however, Mr. Chaffanbrass was as brisk as ever, for nothing ever wore him out when he was pursuing his game—when the interest of those who had been sweltering in the hot court all the day was observed to flag, Mr. Chaffanbrass began twist-

ing round his finger a bit of paper, of which those who were best acquainted with his manner knew that he would soon make use.

“Mr. Scott,” said he, suddenly dropping the derisive sarcasm of his former tone, and addressing him with all imaginable courtesy, “could you oblige me by telling me whose handwriting that is?” and he handed to him the scrap of paper. Undy took it, and saw that the writing was his own; his eyes were somewhat dim, and he can hardly be said to have read it. It was a very short memorandum, and it ran as follows: “All will yet be well, if those shares be ready to-morrow morning.”

“Well, Mr. Scott,” said the lawyer, “do you recognise the handwriting?”

Undy looked at it, and endeavoured to examine it closely, but he could not; his eyes swam, and his head was giddy, and he felt sick. Could he have satisfied himself that the writing was not clearly and manifestly his own, he would have denied the document altogether; but he feared to do this; the handwriting might be proved to be his own.

“It is something like my own,” said he.

“Something like your own, is it?” said Mr. Chaffanbrass, as though he were much surprised.

“Like your own!—well, will you have the goodness to read it?”

Undy turned it in his hand as though the proposed task were singularly disagreeable to

him. Why, thought he to himself, should he be thus browbeaten by a dirty old Newgate lawyer? Why not pluck up his courage, and, at any rate, show that he was a man? "No," said he; "I will not read it."

"Then I will. Gentlemen of the jury, have the goodness to listen to me." Of course there was a contest then between him and the lawyers on the other side whether the document might or might not be read; but equally of course the contest ended in the judge's decision that it should be read. And Mr. Chaffanbrass did read it in a voice audible to all men. "'All will yet be well, if those shares be ready to-morrow morning.' We may take it as admitted, I suppose, that this is in your handwriting, Mr. Scott?"

"It probably may be, though I will not say that it is."

"Do you not know, sir, with positive certainty that it is your writing?"

To this Undy made no direct answer. "What is your opinion, Mr. Scott?" said the judge; "you can probably give an opinion by which the jury would be much guided."

"I think it is, my lord," said Undy.

"He thinks it is," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, addressing the jury. "Well, for once I agree with you. I think it is also—and now will you have the goodness to explain it. To whom was it addressed?"

"I cannot say."

"When was it written?"

"I do not know."

"What does it mean?"

"I cannot remember."

"Was it addressed to Mr. Tudor?"

"I should think not."

"Now, Mr. Scott, have the goodness to look at the jury, and to speak a little louder. You are in the habit of addressing a larger audience than this, and cannot, therefore, be shamefaced. You mean to tell the jury, that you think that that note was not intended by you for Mr. Tudor?"

"I think not," said Undy.

"But you can't say who it was intended for?"

"No."

"And by the virtue of your oath, you have told us all that you know about it." Undy remained silent, but Mr. Chaffanbrass did not press him for an answer. "You have a brother named Valentine, I think." Now Captain Val had been summoned also, and was at this moment in court. Mr. Chaffanbrass requested that he might be desired to leave it, and, consequently, he was ordered out in charge of a policeman.

"And now, Mr. Scott—was that note written by you to Mr. Tudor, with reference to certain shares, which you proposed that Mr. Tudor should place in your brother's hands? Now, sir, I ask you, as a member of Parliament, as a mem-

ber of the Government, as the son of a peer, to give a true answer to that question." And then again Undy was silent; and again Mr. Chaffanbrass leant on the desk and glared at him. "And remember, sir, member of Parliament, and nobleman, as you are, you shall be indicted for perjury, if you are guilty of perjury."

"My lord," said Undy, writhing in torment, "am I to submit to this?"

"Mr. Chaffanbrass," said the judge, "you should not threaten your witness. Mr. Scott—surely you can answer the question."

Mr. Chaffanbrass seemed not to have even heard what the judge said, so intently were his eyes fixed on poor Undy. "Well, Mr. Scott," he said at last, very softly, "is it convenient for you to answer me?" Did that note refer to a certain number of bridge shares, which you required Mr. Tudor to hand over to the step-father of this lady?"

Undy had no trust in his brother. He felt all but sure that, under the fire of Mr. Chaffanbrass, he would confess everything. It would be terrible to own the truth; but it would be more terrible to be indicted for perjury. So he sat silent.

"My lord, perhaps you will ask him," said Mr. Chaffanbrass.

"Mr. Scott; you understand the question—why do you not answer it?" asked the judge. But Undy still remained silent.

"You may go now," said Mr. Chaffanbrass. "Your eloquence is of the silent sort; but, nevertheless, it is very impressive. You may go now, and sit on that bench again, if, after what has passed, the sheriff thinks proper to permit it."

Undy, however, did not try that officer's complaisance. He retired from the witness box, and was not again seen during the trial in any conspicuous place in the court.

It was then past seven o'clock; but Mr. Chaffanbrass insisted on going on with the examination of Captain Val. It did not last long. Captain Val, also, was in that disagreeable position, that he did not know what Undy had confessed, and what denied. So he, also, refused to answer the questions of Mr. Chaffanbrass, saying that he might possibly damage himself should he do so. This was enough for Mr. Chaffanbrass, and then his work was done.

At eight o'clock the court again adjourned; again Charley posted off—for the third time that day—to let Gertrude know that, even as yet, all was not over; and again he and Alaric spent a melancholy evening at the neighbouring tavern; and then again, on the third morning, all were reassembled at the Old Bailey.

Or rather they were not all reassembled. But few came now but those who were obliged to come, and those to whom the expected verdict was matter of grave import, such as Sir Gregory

Hardlines, and others of the Civil Service. But the crack piece of the trial, that portion to which, among the connoisseurs, the interest was attached, that was all over. Mr. Chaffanbrass had done his work. Undy Scott, the member of Parliament, had been gibbeted, and the rest was, in comparison, stale, flat, and unprofitable. The judge and jury, however, were there, so were the prosecuting counsel, so were Mr. Chaffanbrass and Mr. Younglad, and so was poor Alaric. The work of the day was commenced by the judge's charge, and then Alaric, to his infinite dismay, found how all the sophistry and laboured arguments of his very talented advocate were blown to the winds, and shown to be worthless. "Gentlemen," said the judge to the jurors, after he had gone through all the evidence, and told them what was admissible, and what was not—"Gentlemen, I must especially remind you, that in coming to a verdict in the matter, no amount of guilt on the part of any other person can render guiltless him whom you are now trying; or palliate his guilt, if he be guilty. An endeavour has been made to affix a deep stigma on one of the witnesses who has been examined before you; and to induce you to feel, rather than to think, that Mr. Tudor is, at any rate, comparatively innocent; innocent as compared with that gentleman. That is not the issue which you are called on to decide; not whether Mr. Scott, for purposes of his

own, led Mr. Tudor on to guilt, and then turned against him; but whether Mr. Tudor himself has, or has not, been guilty under this act of Parliament that has been explained to you.

“As regards the evidence of Mr. Scott, I am justified in telling you, that if the prisoner’s guilt depended in any way on that evidence, it would be your duty to receive it with the most extreme caution, and to reject it altogether if not corroborated. That evidence was not trustworthy, and in a great measure justified the treatment which the witness encountered from the learned barrister who examined him. But Mr. Scott was a witness for the defence, not for the prosecution. The case for the prosecution in no way hangs on his evidence.

“If it be your opinion that Mr. Tudor be guilty, and that he was unwarily enticed into guilt by Mr. Scott; that the whole arrangement of this trust was brought about by Mr. Scott or others, to enable him or them, to make a cat’s-paw of this new trustee, and thus use the lady’s money for their own purposes, such an opinion on your part may justify you in recommending the prisoner to the merciful consideration of the bench; but it cannot justify you in finding a verdict of not guilty.”

As Alaric heard this, and much more to the same effect, his hopes, which certainly had been high during the examination of Undy Scott, again

sank to zero, and left him in despair. He had almost begun to doubt the fact of his own guilt, so wondrously had his conduct been glossed over by Mr. Chaffanbrass, so strikingly had any good attempt on his part been brought to the light, so black had Scott been made to appear. Ideas floated across his brain that he might go forth, not only free of the law, but whitewashed also in men's opinions, that he might again sit on his throne at the Civil Service Board, again cry to himself "Excelsior," and indulge the old dreams of his ambition.

But, alas! the deliberate and well-poised wisdom of the judge seemed to shower down cold truth upon the jury from his very eyes. His words were low in their tone, though very clear, impassive, delivered without gesticulation or artifice, such as that so powerfully used by Mr. Chaffanbrass; but Alaric himself felt that it was impossible to doubt the truth of such a man; impossible to suppose that any jurymen should do so. Ah, me! why had he brought himself thus to quail beneath the gaze of an old man seated on a bench? with what object had he forced himself to bend his once proud neck? He had been before in courts such as this, and had mocked within his own spirit the paraphernalia of the horse-hair wigs, the judges' faded finery, and the red cloth; he had laughed at the musty stale solemnity by which miscreants were awed,

and policemen enchanted ; now, these things told on himself heavily enough ; he felt now their weight and import.

And then the jury retired from the court to consider their verdict, and Mr. Gitemthruet predicted that they would be hungry enough before they sat down to their next meal. "His lordship was dead against us," said Mr. Gitemthruet ; "but that was a matter of course ; we must look to the jury, and the city juries are very fond of Mr. Chaffanbrass ; I am not quite sure, however, that Mr. Chaffanbrass was right : I would not have admitted so much myself ; but then no one knows a city jury so well as Mr. Chaffanbrass.

Other causes came on, and still the jury did not return to court. Mr. Chaffanbrass seemed to have forgotten the very existence of Alaric Tudor, and was deeply engaged in vindicating a city butcher from an imputation of having vended a dead ass by way of veal. All his indignation was now forgotten, and he was full of boisterous fun, filling the court with peals of laughter. One o'clock came, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and still no verdict. At the latter hour, when the court was about to be adjourned, the foreman came in, and assured the judge that there was no probability that they could agree ; eleven of them thought one way, while the twelfth was opposed to them. "You must reason with the gentleman," said the judge. "I have, my lord," said the jurymen, "but it's all thrown

away upon him." "Reason with him again," said the judge, rising from his bench and preparing to go to his dinner.

And then, one of the great fundamental supports of the British constitution was brought into play. Reason was thrown away upon this tough juryman, and, therefore, it was necessary to ascertain what effect starvation might have upon him. A verdict, that is a unanimous decision from these twelve men as to Alaric's guilt, was necessary; it might be, that three would think him innocent and nine guilty, or that any other division of opinion might take place; but such divisions among a jury are opposed to the spirit of the British constitution. Twelve men must think alike; or if they will not, they must be made to do so. "Reason with him again," said the judge, as he went to his own dinner. Had the judge bade them remind him how hungry he would soon be if he remained obstinate, his lordship would probably have expressed the thought which was passing through his mind. "There is one of us, my lord," said the foreman, "who will I know be very ill before long; he is already so bad that he can't sit upright."

There are many ludicrous points in our blessed constitution, but perhaps nothing so ludicrous as a juryman praying to a judge for mercy. He has been caught, shut up in a box, perhaps, for five or six days together, badgered with half-a-dozen lawyers till he is nearly deaf with their

continual talking, and then he is locked up, until he shall die or find a verdict. Such at least is the intention of the constitution. The death, however, of three or four jurymen from starvation would not suit the humanity of the present age, and, therefore, when extremities are nigh at hand, the dying jurymen, with medical certificates, are allowed to be carried off. It is devoutly to be wished that one jurymen might be starved to death while thus serving the constitution; the absurdity then would cure itself, and a verdict of a majority would be taken.

But in Alaric's case, reason or hunger did prevail at the last moment, and as the judge was leaving the court, he was called back to receive the verdict. Alaric, also, was brought back, still under Mr. Gitemthruet's wing, and with him came Charley. A few officers of the court were there, a jailer and a policeman or two, those whose attendance was absolutely necessary, but with these exceptions the place was empty. Not long since men were crowding for seats, and the policemen were hardly able to restrain the pressure of those who pushed forward; but now there was no pushing; the dingy, dirty benches, a few inches of which had lately been so desirable, were not at all in request, and were anything but inviting in appearance; Alaric, sat himself down on the very spot which had lately been sacred to Mr. Chaffanbrass, and Mr. Gitemthruet seated above him, might also fancy him-

self a barrister. There they sat for five minutes in perfect silence; the suspense of the moment cowed even the attorney, and Charley, who sat on the other side of Alaric, was so affected, that he could hardly have spoken had he wished to do so.

And then the judge, who had been obliged to re-array himself before he returned to the bench, again took his seat, and an officer of the court, inquired of the foreman of the jury in his usual official language what their finding was.

"Guilty on the third count," said the foreman. "Not guilty on the four others. We beg, however, most strongly to recommend the prisoner to your lordship's merciful consideration, believing that he has been led into this crime by one who has been much more guilty than himself."

"I knew Mr. Chaffanbrass was wrong," said Mr. Gitemthruet. "I knew he was wrong when he acknowledged so much. God bless my soul; in a court of law one should never acknowledge anything; what's the use?"

And then came the sentence. He was to be confined at the penitentiary at Millbank for six months. "The offence," said the judge, "of which you have been found guilty, and of which you most certainly have been guilty, is one most prejudicial to the interests of the community. That trust which the weaker of mankind should place in the stronger, that reliance which widows and orphans should feel in their

nearest and dearest friends, would be destroyed, if such crimes as these were allowed to pass unpunished. But in your case there are circumstances which do doubtless palliate the crime of which you have been guilty; the money which you took will, I believe, be restored; the trust which you were courted to undertake should not have been imposed on you; and in the tale of villany which has been laid before us, you have by no means been the worst offender. I have, therefore, inflicted on you the slightest penalty which the law allows me. Mr. Tudor, I know what has been your career, how great your services to your country, how unexceptionable your conduct as a public servant; I trust, I do trust, I most earnestly, most hopefully trust that your career of utility is not over. Your abilities are great, and you are blessed with the power of thinking; I do beseech you to consider, while you undergo that confinement which you needs must suffer, how little any wealth is worth an uneasy conscience."

And so the trial was over. Alaric was taken off in custody; the policeman in mufti was released from his attendance; and Charley, with a heavy heart, carried the news to Gertrude and Mrs. Woodward.

"And as for me," said Gertrude, when she had so far recovered from the first shock as to be able to talk to her mother—"as for me, I will have lodgings at Millbank."

CHAPTER XIII.

A PARTING INTERVIEW.

MRS. WOODWARD remained with her eldest daughter for two days after the trial, and then she was forced to return to Hampton. She had earnestly entreated Gertrude to accompany her, with her child; but Mrs. Tudor was inflexible. She had, she said, very much to do;—so much, that she could not possibly leave London; the home and furniture were on her hands and must be disposed of; their future plans must be arranged; and then nothing, she said, should induce her to sleep out of sight of her husband's prison, or to omit any opportunity of seeing him which the prison rules would allow her.

Mrs. Woodward would not have left one child in such extremity, had not the state of another child made her presence at the cottage indispensable. Katie's anxiety about the trial had of course been intense, so intense as to give her a false strength, and somewhat to deceive Linda as to her real state. Tidings of course passed daily between London and the cottage, but for three days they told nothing. On the morning of the fourth day, however, Norman

brought the heavy news, and Katie sank completely under it. When she first heard the result of the trial she swooned away, and remained for some time nearly unconscious. But returning consciousness brought with it no relief, and she lay sobbing on her pillow, till she became so weak, that Linda in her fright wrote up to her mother begging her to return at once. Then, wretched as it made her to leave Gertrude in her trouble, Mrs. Woodward did return.

For a fortnight after this, there was an unhappy household at Surbiton Cottage. Linda's marriage was put off till the period of Alaric's sentence should be over, and till something should be settled as to his and Gertrude's future career. It was now August, and they spoke of the event as one which perhaps might occur in the course of the following spring. At this time, also, they were deprived for a while of the comfort of Norman's visits by his enforced absence at Norman's Grove. Harry's eldest brother was again ill, and at last the news of his death was received at Hampton. Under other circumstances such tidings as those might, to a certain extent, have brought their own consolation with them. Harry would now be Mr. Norman of Norman's Grove, and Linda would become Mrs. Norman of Norman's Grove; Harry's mother had long been dead, and his father was an infirm old man, who would be too glad to give up to his son the full management of the estate, now that the eldest son

was a man to whom that estate could be trusted. All those circumstances had, of course, been talked over between Harry and Linda, and it was understood that Harry was now to resign his situation at the Weights and Measures. But Alaric's condition, Gertrude's misery, and Katie's illness, threw all such matters into the background. Harry, when he wrote to Linda the news of his brother's death, merely added that he would return to town as soon as the funeral should be over.

Katie became no better; but then the doctors said that she did not become any worse, and gave it as their opinion that she ought to recover. She had youth, they said, on her side, and then her lungs were not affected. This was the great question which they were all asking of each other continually. The poor girl lived beneath a stethoscope, and bore all their pokings and tappings with exquisite patience. She herself believed that she was dying, and so she repeatedly told her mother. Mrs. Woodward could only say that all was in God's hands, but that the physicians still encouraged them to hope the best.

One day Mrs. Woodward was sitting with a book in her usual place at the side of Katie's bed; she looked every now and again at her patient, and thought that she was slumbering, and at last she rose from her chair to creep away, so sure was she that she might be spared for a moment. But just as she was silently rising, a

thin, slight, pale hand crept out from beneath the clothes and laid itself on her arm.

"I thought you were asleep, love," said she.

"No, mama, I was not asleep. I was thinking of something. Don't go away, mama, just now. I want to ask you something."

Mrs. Woodward again sat down, and taking her daughter's hand in her own caressed it.

"I want to ask a favour of you, mama," said Katie.

"A favour, my darling; what is it? you know I will do anything in my power that you ask me."

"Ah, mama, I do not know whether you will do this."

"What is it, Katie? I will do anything that is for your good. I am sure you know that, Katie."

"Mama, I know I am going to die. Oh, mama, don't say anything now, don't cry now—dear, dear mama; I don't say it to make you unhappy; but you know when I am so ill, I ought to think about it; ought I not, mama?"

"But, Katie, the doctor says that he thinks you are not so dangerously ill; you should not, therefore, despond; it will increase your illness, and hinder your chance of getting well. That would be wrong, wouldn't it, love?"

"Mama, I feel that I shall never again be well, and therefore ——" It was useless telling

Mrs. Woodward not to cry ; what else could she do ? “ Dear mama, I am so sorry to make you ^{un}happy, but you are my own, own mama, and therefore I must tell you. I can be happy still, mama, if you will let me talk to you about it.”

“ You shall talk, dearest ; I will hear what you say ; but oh, Katie, I cannot bear to hear you talk of dying. I do not think you are dying ; if I did think so, my child, my trust in your goodness is so strong that I should tell you.”

“ You know, mama, it might have been much worse ; suppose I had been drowned, when he, when Charley you know, saved me ;” and as she mentioned his name a tear for the first time ran down each cheek ; “ how much worse that would have been ! think, mama, what it would be to be drowned without a moment for one’s prayers.”

“ It is quite right we should prepare ourselves for death. Whether we live, or whether we die, we shall be better for doing that.”

Katie still held her mother’s hand in hers, and lay back against the pillows which had been placed behind her back. “ And now, mama,” she said at last, “ I am going to ask you this favour—I want to see Charley once more.”

Mrs. Woodward was so much astonished at the request that at first she knew not what answer to make. “ To see Charley !” she said at last.

“Yes, mama; I want to see Charley once more; there need be no secrets between us now, mama.”

“There have never been any secrets between us,” said Mrs. Woodward, embracing her. “You have never had any secrets from me.”

“Not intentionally, mama; I have never meant to keep anything secret from you. And I know you have known what I felt about Charley.”

“I know that you have behaved like an angel, my child; I know your want of selfishness, your devotion to others has been such as to shame me; I know your conduct has been perfect: oh, my Katie, I have understood it, and I have so loved you, so admired you.”

Katie smiled through her tears as she returned her mother's embrace. “Well, mama,” she said, “at any rate you know that I love him. Oh, mama, I do love him so dearly. It is not now like Gertrude's love, or Linda's. I know that I can never be his wife. I did know, before, that for many reasons I ought not to wish to be so, but now I know I never, never can be.”

Mrs. Woodward was past the power of speaking, and so Katie went on.

“But I do not love him the less for that reason; I think I love him the more. I never, never could have loved any one else, mama; never, never; and that is one reason why I do not so much mind being ill now.”

Mrs. Woodward bowed forward, and hid her face in the counterpane, but she still kept hold of her daughter's hand.

"And, mama," she continued, "as I do love him so dearly, I feel that I should try to do something for him. I ought to do so; and, mama, I could not die happy without seeing him. He is not just like a brother or a brother-in-law, such as Harry and Alaric; we are not bound to each other as relations are; but yet I feel that something does bind me to him. I know he doesn't love me, as I love him; but yet I think he loves me dearly: and if I speak to him now, mama, now that I am—that I am so ill, perhaps he will mind me. Mama, it will be as though one came unto him from the dead.

Mrs. Woodward did not know how to refuse any request that Katie might now make to her, and felt herself altogether unequal to the task of refusing this request. For many reasons she would have done so, had she been able; in the first place she did not think that all chance of Katie's recovery was gone; and then at the present moment she felt no inclination to draw closer to her any of the Tudor family. She could not but feel that Alaric had been the means of disgracing and degrading one child; and truly, deeply, warmly, as she sympathized with the other, she could not bring herself to feel the same sympathy for the object of her love. It was a sore day for her

and hers, that on which the Tudors had first entered her house.

Nevertheless she assented to Katie's proposal, and undertook the task of asking Charley down to Hampton.

Since Alaric's conviction Charley had led a busy life; and as men who have really something to do have seldom time to get into much mischief, he had been peculiarly moral and respectable. It is not surprising that at such a moment Gertrude found that Alaric's newer friends fell off from him. Of course they did; nor is it a sign of ingratitude or heartlessness in the world that at such a period of great distress new friends should fall off. New friends, like one's best coat and polished patent-leather dress boots, are only intended for holiday wear. At other times they are neither serviceable nor comfortable; they do not answer the required purposes, and are ill adapted to give us the ease we seek. A new coat, however, has this advantage, that it will in time become old and comfortable; so much can by no means be predicted with certainty of a new friend. Woe to those men who go through the world with none but new coats on their backs, with no boots but those of polished leather, with none but new friends to comfort them in adversity!

But not the less, when misfortune does come, are we inclined to grumble at finding ourselves deserted. Gertrude, though she certainly wished

to see no Mrs. Val and no Miss Neverbends, did feel lonely enough when her mother left her, and wretched enough. But she was not altogether deserted. At this time Charley was true to her, and did for her all those thousand nameless things which a woman cannot do for herself. He came to her every day after leaving his office, and on one excuse or another remained with her till late every evening.

He was not a little surprised one morning on receiving Mrs. Woodward's invitation to Hampton. Mrs. Woodward in writing had had some difficulty in wording her request. She hardly liked asking Charley to come because Katie was ill; nor did she like to ask him without mentioning Katie's illness. "I need not explain to you," she said in her note, "that we are all in great distress; poor Katie is very ill, and you will understand what we must feel about Alaric and Gertrude. Harry is still at Norman's Grove. We shall all be glad to see you, and Katie, who never forgets what you did for her, insists on my asking you at once. I am sure you will not refuse her, so I shall expect you to-morrow." Charley would not have refused her anything, and it need hardly be said that he accepted the invitation.

Mrs. Woodward was at a loss how to receive him, or what to say to him. Though Katie was so positive that her own illness would be fatal—a symptom which might have confirmed those who watched her in their opinion that her dis-

ease was not consumption—her mother was by no means so desponding. She still thought it not impossible that her child might recover, and so thinking could not but be adverse to any declaration on Katie's part of her own feelings. She had endeavoured to explain this to her daughter; but Katie was so carried away by her enthusiasm, was at the present moment so devoted, and as it were exalted above her present life, that all that her mother said was thrown away upon her. Mrs. Woodward might have refused her daughter's request, and have run the risk of breaking her heart by the refusal; but now that the petition had been granted, it was useless to endeavour to teach her to repress her feelings.

"Charley," said Mrs. Woodward, when he had been some little time in the house, "our dear Katie wants to see you—she is very ill, you know."

Charley said he knew she was ill.

"You remember our walk together, Charley."

"Yes," said Charley, "I remember it well. I made you a promise then and I have kept it. I have now come here only because you have sent for me." This he said in the tone which a man uses when he feels himself to have been injured.

"I know it, Charley; you have kept your promise; I knew you would, and I know you will. I have the fullest trust in you; and now you shall come and see her."

Charley was to return to town that night, and they had not therefore much time to lose ; they went up stairs at once, and found Linda and Uncle Bat in the patient's room. It was a lovely August evening, and the bed-room window opening upon the river was unclosed. Katie, as she sat propped up against the pillows, could look out upon the water and see the reedy island, on which in happy former days she had so delighted to let her imagination revel.

"It is very good of you to come, and see me, Charley," said she, as he made his way up to her bed-side.

He took her thin wasted hand in his own and pressed it, and, as he did so, a tear forced itself into each corner of his eyes. She smiled as though to cheer him, and said that now she saw him she could be quite happy, only for poor Alaric and Gertrude. She hoped she might live to see Alaric again ; but if not, Charley was to give him her best—best love.

"Live to see him ! of course you will ;" said Uncle Bat. "What's to hinder you ?" Uncle Bat, like the rest of them, tried to cheer her, and make her think that she might yet live.

After a while Uncle Bat went out of the room, and Linda followed him. Mrs. Woodward would fain have remained, but she perfectly understood that it was part of the intended arrangement with Katie, that Charley should be alone with her. "I will come back in a quarter of an hour,"

she said, rising to follow the others. You must not let her talk too much, Charley : you see how weak she is."

"Mama, when you come, knock at the door will you?" said Katie. Mrs. Woodward, who found herself obliged to act in complete obedience to her daughter, promised that she would ; and then they were left alone.

"Sit down, Charley," said she ; he was still standing by her bed-side, and now at her bidding he sat in the chair which Captain Cuttwater had occupied. "Come here, nearer to me," said she ; "this is where mama always sits, and Linda when mama is not here." Charley did as he was bid, and changing his seat came and sat down close to her bed-head.

"Charley, do you remember how you went into the water for me?" said she, again smiling, and putting her hand out and resting it on his arm which lay on the bed beside her.

"Indeed, I do, Katie—I remember the day very well."

"That was a very happy day in spite of the tumble ; was it not, Charley ? And do you remember the flower-show, and the dance at Mrs. Val's ?"

Charley did remember them all well. Ah me ! how often had he thought of them.

"I think of those days so often—too often," continued Katie. "But, dear Charley, I cannot remember too often that you saved my life."

Charley once more tried to explain to her that there was nothing worthy of notice in his exploit of that day.

“Well, Charley, I may think as I like, you know,” she said, with something of the obstinacy of old days. “I think you did save my life, and all the people in the world won’t make me think anything else; but, Charley, I have something now to tell you.”

He sat and listened. It seemed to him as though he were only there to listen; as though were he to make his own voice audible he would violate the sanctity of the place. His thoughts were serious enough, but he could not pitch his voice so as to suit the tone in which she addressed him.

“We were always friends, were we not?” said she; “we were always good friends, Charley. Do you remember how you were to build a palace for me in the dear old island out there? You were always so kind, so good to me.”

Charley said he remembered it all—they were happy days; the happiest days, he said, that he had ever known.

“And you used to love me, Charley?”
“Used!” said he—“do you think I do not love you now?” “I am sure you do. And, Charley, I love you also—that it is that I want to tell you. I love you so well that I cannot go away from this world in peace without wishing you farewell. Charley, if you love me, you will think of me when

I am gone ; and then for my sake you will be steady."

Here were all her old words over again. "You will be steady, won't you, Charley? I know you will be steady, now." How much must she have thought of him? how often must his career have caused her misery and pain? how laden must that innocent bosom have been with anxiety on his account? He had promised her then that he would reform; but he had broken his promise. He now promised her again, but how could he hope that she would believe him?

"You know how ill I am, don't you? you know that I am dying, Charley?"

Charley of course declared that he still hoped that she would recover.

"If I thought so," said she, "I should not say what I am now saying; but I feel that I may tell the truth. Dear Charley, dearest Charley, I love you with all my heart—I do not know how it came so; I believe I have always loved you since I first knew you; I used to think it was because you saved my life: but I know it was not that. I was so glad it was you that came to me in the water, and not Harry; so that I know I loved you before that."

"Dear Katie, you have not loved me, or thought of me, more than I have loved and thought of you."

"Ah, Charley," she said, smiling in her sad, sweet way—"I don't think you know how a girl

can love; you have so many things to think of, so much to amuse you up in London; you don't know what it is to think of one person for days and days, and nights and nights together. That is the way I have thought of you."

"I don't think there can be any harm," she continued, "in loving a person as I have loved you. Indeed, how could I help it? I did not love you on purpose. But I think I should be wrong to die without telling you. When I am dead, Charley, will you think of this, and try, try to give up your bad ways? When I tell you that I love you so dearly, and ask you on my death-bed, I think you will do this."

Charley went down on his knees, and bowing his head before her and before his God, he made his promise. He made it, and we may so far anticipate the approaching end of our story, as to declare that the promise he then made was faithfully kept.

"Katie, Katie, my own Katie, my own, own, own Katie—oh, Katie, you must not die, you must not leave me. Oh, Katie, I have so dearly loved you! Oh, Katie, I do so dearly love you! If you knew all, if you could know all, you would believe me."

At this moment Mrs. Woodward knocked at the door, and Charley rose from his knees. "Not quite yet, mama," said Katie, as Mrs. Woodward opened the door. "Not quite yet; in five minutes, mama, you may come;" and Mrs.

Woodward, not knowing how to refuse, again went away.

“Charley, I never gave you anything but once, and you returned it to me, did you not?”

“Yes,” said he, “the purse—I put it in your box, because——”

And then he remembered that he could not say why he had returned it without breaking in a manner that confidence which Mrs. Woodward had put in him.

“I understand it all; you must not think I was angry with you. I knew how good you were about it. But, Charley, you may have it back now; here it is;” and putting her hand under the pillow, she took it out, carefully folded up in new tissue paper. “There, Charley, you must never part with it again as long as there are two threads of it together; but I know you never will; and Charley, you must never talk of it to anybody; but to your wife, and you must tell her all about it.”

He took the purse, and put it to his lips, and then pressed it to his heart. “No,” said he, “I will never part with it again. I think I can promise that.”

“And now, dearest, good bye,” said she; “dearest, dearest Charley, good bye; perhaps we shall know each other in heaven. Kiss me, Charley, before you go.” So he stooped down over her, and pressed his lips to hers.

Charley, leaving the room, found Mrs. Wood-

ward at the other end of the passage, standing at the door of her own dressing-room. "You are to go to her now," he said. "Good bye," and without further speech to any of them he hurried out of the house.

None but Mrs. Woodward had seen him, but she saw that the tears were streaming down his cheeks as he passed her, and she expressed no surprise that he had left the cottage without going through the formality of making his adieux.

And then he walked up to town, as Norman once had done, after a parting interview with her whom he had loved. It might be difficult to say which at the moment suffered the bitterest grief.

CHAPTER XIV.

MILLBANK.

THE immediate neighbourhood of Millbank Penitentiary is not one which we should, for its own sake, choose for our residence, either on account of its natural beauty, or the excellence of its habitations. That it is a salubrious locality must be presumed from the fact that it has been selected for the site of the institution in question; but salubrity, though doubtless a great recommendation, would hardly reconcile us to the extremely dull, and one might almost say, ugly aspect, which this district bears.

To this district, however, ugly as it is, we must ask our readers to accompany us, while we pay a short visit to poor Gertrude. It was certainly a sad change from her comfortable nursery and elegant drawing-room near the Hyde Park. Gertrude had hitherto never lived in an ugly house. Surbiton Cottage and Albany Place were the only two homes that she remembered; and neither of them were such as to give her much fitting preparation for the melancholy shelter which she found at No. 5, Paradise Row, Millbank.

But Gertrude did not think much of this when

she changed her residence. Early one morning, leaning on Charley's arm, she had trudged down across the park, through Westminster, and on to the close vicinity of the prison; and here they sought for and obtained such accommodation as she thought fitting to her present situation. Charley had begged her to get into a cab, and when she refused that had implored her to indulge in the luxury of an omnibus; but Gertrude's mind was now set upon economy; she would come back she said in an omnibus when the day would be hotter, and she would be alone, but she was very well able to walk the distance once.

She procured for seven shillings a week a sitting room and bed-room from whence she could see the gloomy prison walls, and also a truckle bed for the young girl whom she was to bring with her as her maid. This was a little Hampton maiden whom she had brought from the country to act as fag and deputy to her grand nurse, but the grand nurse was now gone, and the fag was promoted to the various offices of nurse, lady's-maid, and parlour servant. The rest of the household in Albany Place had already dispersed with the discreet view of bettering their situations.

Everything in the house was given up to pay what Alaric owed. Independently of his dreadful liability to Madame Jaquêtanàpe, he could not have been said to be in debt; but still, like most other men who live as he had done, when his

career was thus brought to a sudden close, it was found that there were many people looking for money. There were little bills, as the owners said of them, which had been forgotten, of course, on account of their insignificance, but which being so very little might now be paid, equally of course, without any trouble. It is astonishing how easy it is to accumulate three or four hundred pounds' worth of little bills, when one lives before the world in a good house and in visible possession of a good income.

At the moment of Alaric's conviction there was but a slender stock of money forthcoming for these little bills. The necessary expense of his trial,—and it had been by no means trifling,—he had, of course, been obliged to pay. His salary had been suspended, and all the money that he could lay his hands on, had been given up towards making restitution towards the dreadful sum of 20,000*l.* that had been his ruin. The bills, however, did not come in till after his trial, and then there was but little left but the furniture.

As the new trustees employed on behalf of Madame Jaquêtanàpe and Mr. Figgs were well aware that they had much more to expect from the generosity of Tudor's friends than from any legal seizure of his property, they did not interfere in the disposal of the chairs and tables. But not on that account did Gertrude conceive herself entitled to make any use in her own behalf

of such money as might come into her hands. The bills should be paid, and then every farthing that could be collected should be given towards lessening the deficiency. Six thousand pounds had already been made up by the joint efforts of Norman and Captain Cuttwater. Undy Scott's acknowledgment for the other four thousand had been offered, but the new trustees declined to accept it as of any value whatsoever. They were equally incredulous as to the bridge shares, which from that day to this have never held up their head, even to the modest height of half a crown a share.

Gertrude's efforts to make the most of everything had been unceasing. When her husband was sentenced she had in her possession a new dress and some finery for her baby, which were not yet paid for; these she took back with her own hand, offering to the milliners her own trinkets by way of compensation for their loss. When the day for removal came, she took with her nothing that she imagined could be sold. She would have left the grander part of her own wardrobe, if the auctioneers would have undertaken to sell it. Some few things, books and trifling household articles, which she thought were dear to Alaric, she packed up; and such were sent to Hampton. On the day of her departure she dressed herself in a plain dark gown, one that was almost mourning, and then, with her baby

in her lap, and her young maid beside her, and Charley fronting her in the cab, she started for her new home.

I had almost said that her pride had left her. Such an assertion would be a gross libel on her. No; she was perhaps prouder than ever, as she left her old home. There was a humility in her cheap dress, in her large straw bonnet coming far over her face, in her dark gloves and little simple collar; nay, there was a humility in her altered voice, and somewhat chastened mien; but the spirit of the woman was wholly unbroken. She had even a pride in her very position, in her close and dear tie with the convicted prisoner. She was his for better and for worse; she would now show him what was her idea of the vow she had made. To the men who came to ticket and number the furniture, to the tradesmen's messengers who called for money, to the various workmen with whom the house was then invaded, she was humble enough; but had Mrs. Val come across her with pity, or the Miss Neverbends with their sententious twaddlings, she would have been prouder than ever. Fallen indeed! she had had no fall; nor had he; he was still a man, with a greater aggregate of good within him than falls to the average lot of mortals. Who would dare to tell her that he had fallen? 'Twas thus that her pride was still strong within her; and as it supported her through this misery, who can blame her for it?

She was allowed into the prison twice a week ; on Tuesdays and Fridays she was permitted to spend one hour with her husband, and to take her child with her. It is hardly necessary to say that she was punctual to the appointed times. This, however, occupied but a short period, even of those looked-for days ; and in spite of her pride, and her constant needle, the weary six months went from her all too slowly.

Nor did they pass with swifter foot within the prison. Alaric was allowed the use of books and pens and paper, but even with these he found a day in prison to be almost an unendurable eternity. This was the real punishment of his guilt ; it was not that he could not eat well, and lie soft, or enjoy the comforts which had always surrounded him ; but that the day would not pass away. The slowness of the lagging hours nearly drove him mad. He made a thousand resolutions as to reading, writing, and employment for his mind. He attempted to learn whole pages by rote, and to fatigue himself to rest by exercise of his memory. But his memory would not work ; his mind would continue idle ; he was impotent over his own faculties. Oh, if he could only sleep while those horrid weeks were passing over him.

All hope of regaining his situation had of course passed from him, all hopes of employment in England. Emigration must now be his lot ; and hers also, and the lot of that young one

that was already born to them, and of that other one who was, alas! now coming to the world, whose fate it would be first to see the light under the walls of its father's prison.—Yes, they must emigrate.—But there was nothing so very terrible in that. Alaric felt that even his utter poverty would be no misfortune if only this captivity were over. Poverty—how could any man be poor who had liberty to roam the world!

We all of us acknowledge that the educated man who breaks the laws is justly liable to a heavier punishment than he who has been born in ignorance, and bred, as it were, in the lap of sin; but we hardly realize how much greater is the punishment which, when he be punished, the educated man is forced to undergo. Confinement to the man whose mind has never been lifted above vacancy, is simply remission from labour. Confinement, with labour, is simply the enforcement of that which has hitherto been his daily lot. But what must a prison be to him whose intellect has received the polish of the world's poetry, who has known what it is to feed more than the belly, to require other aliment than bread and meat!

And then what does the poor criminal lose? his all, it will be said; and the rich can lose no more. But this is not so. No man loses all by any sentence which a human judge can inflict. No man so loses anything approaching to his all, however much he may have lost before. But the

one man has too often had no self-respect to risk; the other has stood high in his own esteem, has held his head proudly before the world, has aspired to walk in some way after the fashion of a god.—Alaric had so aspired, and how must he have felt during those prison days? Of what nature must his thoughts have been when they turned to Gertrude and his child. His sin had indeed been heavy, and heavy was the penalty which he suffered.

When they had been thus living for about three months Gertrude's second child was born. Mrs. Woodward was with her at the time, and she had suffered but little except that for three weeks she had been unable to see her husband; then, in the teeth of all counsel, and in opposition to all medical warning, she could resist no longer and carried the new-born stranger to his father.

"Poor little wretch!" said Alaric, as he stooped to kiss him.

"Wretch!" said Gertrude, looking up to him with a smile upon her face—"he is no wretch. He is a sturdy little man, that shall yet live to make your heart dance with joy."

Mrs. Woodward came often to see her. She did not stay, for there was no bed in which she could have slept; but the train put her down at Vauxhall, and she had but to pass the bridge, and she was close to Gertrude's lodgings. And now the six months had nearly gone by, when, by appointment, she brought Norman with her.

At this time he had given up his clerkship, at the Weights and Measures, and was about to go to Norman's Grove for the remainder of the winter. Both Alaric and Norman had shown a great distaste to meet each other. When Mrs. Woodward had expressed a hope that they would do so before Alaric took his final departure for Australia, neither had positively refused to accede to her request; but it was so clear both to her and to Gertrude that neither wished it, that the idea was abandoned. But Harry's heart softened towards Gertrude. Her conduct during her husband's troubles had been so excellent, that he could not but forgive her the injuries which he fancied he owed to her.

Everything was now prepared for their departure. They were to sail on the very day after Alaric's liberation, so as to save him from the misery of meeting those who might know him. And now Harry came with Mrs. Woodward to bid farewell, probably for ever on this side the grave, to her whom he had once looked on as his own. How different were their lots now! Harry was Mr. Norman, of Norman's Grove, immediately about to take his place as the squire of his parish, to sit among brother magistrates, to decide about roads and poachers, parish rates and other all-absorbing topics, to be a rural magistrate, and fill a place among perhaps the most fortunate of the world's inhabitants. Gertrude was the wife of a convicted felon, who was about

to come forth from his prison in utter poverty, a man who, in such a catalogue as the world makes of its inhabitants, would be ranked among the very lowest.

And did Gertrude even now regret her choice? No, not for a moment! She still felt certain in her heart of hearts that she had loved the one who was the most worthy of a woman's love. We cannot, probably, all agree in her opinion; but we will agree in this, at least, that she was now right to hold such opinion. Had Norman's Grove stretched from one boundary of the county to the other, it would have weighed as nothing. Had Harry's virtues been as bright as burnished gold—and indeed they had been bright—they would have weighed as nothing. A nobler stamp of manhood was on her husband—so at least Gertrude felt;—and manhood is the one virtue which in a woman's breast outweighs all others.

They had not met since the evening on which Gertrude had declared to him that she never could love him; and Norman, as he got out of the cab with Mrs. Woodward, at No. 5, Paradise Row, Millbank, felt his heart beat within him almost as strongly as he had done when he was about to propose to her. He followed Mrs. Woodward into the dingy little house, and immediately found himself in Gertrude's presence.

I should exaggerate the fact, were I to say that he would not have known her; but had he met her elsewhere, met her where he did not ex-

pect to meet her, he would have looked at her more than once before he felt assured that he was looking at Gertrude Woodward. It was not that she had grown pale, or worn, or haggard; though, indeed, her face had on it that weighty look of endurance which care will always give; it was not that she had lost her beauty, and become unattractive in his eyes; but that the whole nature of her mien and form, the very trick of her gait was changed. Her eye was as bright as ever, but it was steady, composed, and resolved; her lips were set and compressed, and there was no playfulness round her mouth. Her hair was still smooth and bright, but it was more brushed off from her temples than it had been of yore, and was partly covered by a bit of black lace, which we presume we must call a cap; here and there, too, through it, Norman's quick eye detected a few gray hairs. She was stouter too than she had been, or else she seemed to be so from the changes in her dress. Her step fell heavier on the floor than it used to do, and her voice was quicker and more decisive in its tones. When she spoke to her mother, she did so as one sister might do to another; and, indeed, Mrs. Woodward seemed to exercise over her very little of the authority of a parent. The truth was that Gertrude had altogether ceased to be a girl, had altogether become a woman. Linda, with whom Norman at once compared her, though but one year younger, was still a child

in comparison with her elder sister. Happy, happy Linda!

Gertrude had certainly proved herself to be an excellent wife; but perhaps she might have made herself more pleasing to others if she had not so entirely thrown off from herself all traces of juvenility. Could she, in this respect, have taken a lesson from her mother, she would have been a wiser woman. We have said that she consorted with Mrs. Woodward, as though they had been sisters; but one might have said that Gertrude took on her self the manners of the elder sister. It is true that she had hard duties to perform, a stern world to get the better of, an uphill fight before her with poverty, distress, and almost, nay absolutely, with degradation. It was well for her and Alaric that she could face it all with the true courage of an honest woman. But yet those who had known her in her radiant early beauty, could not but regret that the young freshness of early years should all have been laid aside so soon.

“Linda, at any rate, far exceeds her in beauty,” was Norman’s first thought, as he stood for a moment to look at her—“and then Linda too is so much more feminine.” Twas thus that Harry Norman consoled himself in the first moment of his first interview with Alaric’s wife. And he was right in his thoughts. The world would now have called Linda the more lovely of the two, and certainly the more feminine in the

ladylike sense of the word. If, however, devotion be feminine, and truth to one selected life's companion, if motherly care be so, and an indomitable sense of the duties due to one's own household, then Gertrude was not deficient in feminine character.

"You find me greatly altered, Harry, do you not?" said she, taking his hand frankly, and perceiving immediately the effect which she had made upon him. "I am a steady old matron, am I not?—with a bairn on each side of me," and she pointed to her baby in the cradle, and to her other boy sitting on his grandmother's knee.

Harry said he did find her altered. It was her dress, he said, and the cap on her head.

"Yes, Harry; and some care and trouble too. To you, you know, to a friend such as you are, I must own that care and trouble do tell upon one. Not, thank God, that I have more than I can bear; not that I have not blessings for which I cannot be too thankful."

"And so these are your boys, Gertrude?"

"Yes," said she, cheerfully, "these are the little men, that in the good times coming will be managing vast kingdoms, and giving orders to this worn-out old island of yours. Alley, my boy, sing your new song about the 'good and happy land.'" But Alley, who had got hold of his grandmother's watch, and was staring with all his eyes at the stranger, did not seem much inclined to be musical at the present moment.

"And this is Charley's godson," continued Gertrude, taking up the baby; "dear Charley; he has been such a comfort to me."

"I have heard all about you daily from him," said Harry.

"I know you have—and he is daily talking of you, Harry. And so he should do; so we all should do. What a glorious change this is for him, is it not, Harry?"

Charley by this time had torn himself away from Mr. Snape and the navvies, and transferred the whole of his official zeal and energies to the Weights and Measures. The manner and reason of this must, however, be explained in a subsequent chapter.

"Yes," said Harry, "he has certainly got into a better office."

"And he will do well there."

"I am sure he will. It was impossible he should do well at that other place. No man could do so. He is quite an altered man now. The only fault I find with him is that he is so full of his heroes and heroines."

"So he is, Harry; he is always asking me what he is to do with some forlorn lady or gentleman. 'Oh, smother her;' I said the other day. 'Well,' said he, with a melancholy gravity, 'I'll try it; but I fear it won't answer.' Poor Charley; what a friend you have been to him, Harry!"

"A friend," said Mrs. Woodward, who was still true to her adoration for Norman. "Indeed

he has been a friend. A friend to us all. Who is there like him?"

Gertrude could have found it in her heart to go back to the subject of old days, and tell her mother that there was somebody much better even than Harry Norman. But the present was hardly a time for such an assertion of her own peculiar opinion.

"Yes, Harry," she said, "we have all much, too much to thank you for. I have to thank you on his account."

"Oh, no," said he, ungraciously; "there is nothing to thank me for, not on his account. Your mother and Captain Cuttwater——" and then he stopped himself. What he meant was that he had sacrificed his little fortune—for at the time his elder brother had still been living—not to rescue, or in attempting to rescue his old friend from misfortune—not, at least, because that man had been his friend; but because he was the husband of Gertrude Woodward, and of Mrs. Woodward's daughter. Could he have laid bare his heart, he would have declared that Alaric Tudor owed him nothing, that he had never forgiven, never could forgive, the wrongs he had received from him; but that he had forgiven Alaric's wife; and that having done so in the tenderness of his heart, he had been ready to give up all that he possessed for her protection. He would have spared Gertrude what pain he could;

but he would not lie, and speak of Alaric Tudor with affection.

“But there is, Harry ; there is,” said Gertrude ; “much—too much—greatly too much. It is that now weighs me down more than anything. Oh ! Harry, how are we to pay to you all this money ? ”

“It is with Mrs. Woodward,” said he, coldly, “and Captain Cuttwater, not with me, that you should speak of that. Mr. Tudor owes me nothing.”

“Oh, Harry, Harry,” said she, “do not call him Mr. Tudor—pray, pray ; now that we are going—now that we shall never wound your sight again ; do not call him Mr. Tudor. He has done wrong ; I do not deny it ; but which of us is there that has not ? ”

“It was not on that account,” said he ; “I could forgive all that.”

Gertrude understood him, and her cheeks and brow became tinged with red. It was not from shame, nor yet wholly from a sense of anger, but mingled feelings filled her heart ; feelings which she could in nowise explain. “If you have forgiven him that”—she would have said, had she thought it right to speak out her mind—“if you have forgiven him that, then there is nothing left for further forgiveness.”

Gertrude had twice a better knowledge of the world than he had, twice a quicker perception of

how things were going, and should be made to go. She saw that it was useless to refer further to her husband. Norman had come there at her request to say adieu to her; that she and he, who had been friends since she was a child, might see each other before they were separated for ever by half a world, and that they might part in love and charity. She would be his sister-in-law, he would be son to her mother, husband to her Linda; he had been, though he now denied it, her husband's staunchest friend in his extremity; and it would have added greatly to the bitterness of her departure had she been forced to go without speaking to him one kindly word. The opportunity was given to her, and she would not utterly mar its sweetness by insisting on his injustice to her husband.

They all remained silent for a while, during which Gertrude fondled her baby, and Norman produced before the elder boy some present that he had brought for him.

"Now, Alley," said Mrs. Woodward, "you're a made man; won't that do beautifully to play with on board the big ship?"

"And so, Harry, you have given up official life altogether," said Gertrude.

"Yes," said he—"the last day of the last year saw my finale at the Weights and Measures. I did not live long—officially—to enjoy my promotion. I almost wish myself back again."

"You'll go in on melting days, like the retired

tallow chandler," said Gertrude ; " but, joking apart, I wish you joy on your freedom from thralldom ; a government office in England is thralldom. If a man were to give his work only, it would be well. All men who have to live by labour must do that ; but a man has to give his self as well as his work ; to sacrifice his individuality ; to become body and soul a part of a lumbering old machine."

This hardly came well from Gertrude, seeing that Alaric at any rate had never been required to sacrifice any of his individuality. But she was determined to hate all the antecedents of his life, as though those antecedents, and not the laxity of his own principles, had brought about his ruin. She was prepared to live entirely for the future, and to look back on her London life as bad, tasteless, and demoralizing. England to her was no longer a glorious country ; for England's laws had made a felon of her husband. She would go to a new land, new hopes, new ideas, new freedom, new work, new life, and a new ambition. Excelsior ! there was no longer an excelsior left for talent and perseverance in this effete country. She and hers would soon find room for their energies in a younger land ; and as she went, she could not but pity those whom she left behind. Her reasoning was hardly logical, but, perhaps, it was not unfortunate.

" For myself," said Norman, not quite following all this—" I always liked the Civil Service,

and now I leave it with a sort of regret. I am quite glad that Charley has my old desk ; it will keep up a sort of tie between me and the place."

"What does Linda say about it, mama?"

"Linda and I are both of Harry's way of thinking," said Mrs. Woodward, "because Norman's Grove is such a distance."

"Distance!" repeated Gertrude, with something of sorrow, but more of scorn in her tone. "Distance, mama! why you can get to her between breakfast and dinner; think where Melbourne is, mama!"

"It has nearly broken my heart to think of it," said Mrs. Woodward.

"And you will still have Linda, mama, and our darling Katie, and Harry, and dear Charley. If the idea of distance should frighten any one it is me. But nothing shall frighten me while I have my husband and children. Harry, you must not let mama be too often alone when some other knight shall have come and taken away Katie."

"We will take her to Norman's Grove for good and all, if she will let us," said Harry.

And now the time came for them to part. Harry was to say good bye to her, and then to see her no more. Early on the following morning Gertrude was to go to Hampton and see Katie for the last time; to see Katie for the last time, and the cottage, and the shining river, and all the well-known objects among which she had

passed her life. To Mrs. Woodward, to Linda, and Katie, all this was subject of inexpressible melancholy; but with Gertrude every feeling of romance seemed to have been absorbed by the realities of life. She would, of course, go to Katie and give her a farewell embrace, since Katie was still too weak to come to her; she would say farewell to Uncle Bat, to whom she and Alaric owed so much; she would doubtless shed a tear or two, and feel some emotion at parting, even from the inanimate associations of her youth; but all this would now impress no lasting sorrow on her.

She was eager to be off, eager for her new career, eager that he should stand on a soil where he could once more face his fellow-creatures without shame. She panted to put thousands of leagues of ocean between him and his disgrace.

On the following morning Gertrude was to go to Hampton for two hours, and then to return to Millbank, with her mother and sister, for whose accommodation a bed had been hired in the neighbourhood. On that evening Alaric would be released from his prison; and then before day-break on the following day they were to take their way to the far-off docks, and place themselves on board the vessel which was to carry them to their distant home.

“God bless you, Gertrude,” said Norman, whose eyes were not dry.

“God Almighty bless you, Harry, you and Linda—and make you happy. If Linda does

not write constantly, very constantly, you must do it for her. We have delayed the happiness of your marriage, Harry—you must forgive us that, as well as all our other trespasses. I fear Linda will never forgive that.”

“You won’t find her unmerciful on that score,” said he. “Dear Gertrude, good bye.”

She put up her face to him, and he kissed her, for the first time in his life. “He bade me give you his love,” said she, in her last whisper; “I must, you know, do his bidding.”

Norman’s heart palpitated so that he could hardly compose his voice for his last answer; but even then he would not be untrue to his inexorable obstinacy; he could not send his love to a man he did not love. “Tell him,” said he, “that he has my sincerest wishes for success, wherever he may be; and Gertrude, I need hardly say”—but he could get no further.

And so they parted.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CRIMINAL POPULATION IS DISPOSED OF.

BEFORE we put Alaric on board the ship which is to take him away from the land in which he might have run so exalted a career, we must say one word as to the fate and fortunes of his old friend Undy Scott. This gentleman has not been represented in our pages as an amiable or high-minded person. He has indeed been the bad spirit of the tale, the Seeva of our mythology, the devil that has led our hero into temptation, the incarnation of evil, which it is always necessary that the novelist should have personified in one of his characters to enable him to bring about his misfortunes, his tragedies, and various requisite catastrophes. Scott had his Varney and such like; Dickens, his Bill Sykes and such like; all of whom are properly disposed of before the end of those volumes in which are described their respective careers. I have ventured to introduce to my readers, as my devil, Mr. Undy Scott, M.P., for the Tillietudlem district burghs; and I also feel myself bound to dispose of him, though of him I regret I cannot make so decent an end as was done with Sir Richard Varney and Bill Sykes.

He deserves, however, as severe a fate as either of those heroes. With the former we will not attempt to compare him, as the vices and devilry of the days of Queen Elizabeth are in no way similar to those in which we indulge; but with Bill Sykes we may contrast him, as they flourished in the same era, and had their points of similitude, as well as their points of difference.

They were apparently both born to prey on their own species; they both resolutely adhered to a fixed rule that they would in nowise earn their bread, and to a rule equally fixed that, though they would earn no bread, they would consume much. They were both of them blessed with a total absence of sensibility and an utter disregard to the pain of others, and had no other use for a heart than that of a machine for maintaining the circulation of the blood. It is but little to say that neither of them ever acted on principle, on a knowledge, that is, of right and wrong, and a selection of the right; in their studies of the science of evil they had progressed much further than this, and had taught themselves to believe that that which other men called virtue was, on its own account, to be regarded as mawkish, insipid, and useless for such purposes as the acquisition of money or pleasure; whereas vice was, on its own account, to be preferred, as offering the only road to those things which they were desirous of possessing.

So far there was a great resemblance between Bill Sykes and Mr. Scott; but then came the points of difference, which must give to the latter a great pre-eminence in the eyes of that master whom they had both so worthily served. Bill could not boast the merit of selecting the course which he had run; he had served the Devil, having had, as it were, no choice in the matter; he was born and bred and educated an evildoer, and could hardly have deserted from the colours of his great Captain, without some spiritual interposition to enable him to do so. To Undy a warmer reward must surely be due: he had been placed fairly on the world's surface, with power to choose between good and bad, and had deliberately taken the latter; to him had, at any rate, been explained the theory of *meum* and *tuum*, and he had resolved that he liked *tuum* better than *meum*; he had learnt that there is a God ruling over us, and a Devil hankering after us, and had made up his mind that he would belong to the latter. Bread and water would have come to him naturally without any villany on his part, ay, and meat and milk, and wine and oil, the fat things of the world; but he elected to be a villain; he liked to do the Devil's bidding.—Surely he was the better servant; surely he shall have the richer reward.

And yet poor Bill Sykes, for whom here I would willingly say a word or two, could I, by so saying, mitigate the wrath against him, is al-

ways held as the more detestable scoundrel. Lady, you now know them both. Is it not the fact, that, knowing him as you do, you could spend a pleasant hour enough with Mr. Scott sitting next to him at dinner, whereas your blood would creep within you, your hair would stand on end, your voice would stick in your throat, if you were suddenly told that Bill Sykes was in your presence?

Poor Bill! I have a sort of love for him, as he walks about, wretched with that dog of his, though I know that it is necessary to hang him. Yes, Bill; I, your friend, cannot gainsay that, must acknowledge that. Hard as the case may be, you must be hung; hung out of the way of further mischief: my spoons, my wife's throat, my children's brains, demand that. You, Bill, and polecats, and such like, must be quenched when we can come across you, seeing that you make yourself so universally disagreeable. It is your ordained nature to be disagreeable; you plead silently. I know it; I admit the hardship of your case; but still, my Bill, self-preservation is the first law of nature. You must be hung. But while hanging you, I admit that you are more sinned against than sinning. There is another, Bill, another, who will surely take account of this in some way, though it is not for me to tell you how.

Yes, I hang Bill Sykes with soft regret; but with what a savage joy, with what exultation of

heart, with what alacrity of eager soul, with what aptitude of mind to the deed, would I hang my friend, Undy Scott, the member of Parliament for the Tillietudlem burghs, if I could but get at his throat for such a purpose. Hang him ! ay, as high as Haman ! In this there would be no regret, no vacillation of purpose, no doubt as to the propriety of the sacrifice, no feeling that I was so treating him, not for his own desert, but for my advantage.

We hang men, I believe, with this object only, that we should deter others from crime ; but in hanging Bill, we shall hardly deter his brother. Dick Sykes must look to crime for his bread, seeing that he has been so educated, seeing that we have not yet taught him another trade.

But if I could hang Undy Scott, I think I should deter some others. The figure of Undy swinging from a gibbet at the broad end of Lombard Street would have an effect. Ah ! my fingers itch to be at the rope.

Fate, however, and the laws are averse. To gibbet him, in one sense, would have been my privilege, had I drank deeper from that Castalian rill whose dark waters are tinged with the gall of poetic indignation ; but as in other sense I may not hang him, I will tell how he was driven from his club, and how he ceased to number himself among the legislators of his country.

Undy Scott, among his other good qualities, possessed an enormous quantity of that which

schoolboys in these days call "cheek." He was not easily browbeaten ; and was generally prepared to browbeat others. Mr. Chaffanbrass certainly did get the better of him ; but then Mr. Chaffanbrass was on his own dunghill. Could Undy Scott have had Mr. Chaffanbrass down at the clubs, there would have been, perhaps, another tale to tell.

Give me the cock that can crow in any yard ; such cocks, however, we know are scarce. Undy Scott, as he left the Old Bailey, was aware that he had cut a sorry figure, and felt that he must immediately do something to put himself right again, at any rate before his portion of the world. He must perform some exploit uncommonly cheeky, in order to cover his late discomfiture. To get the better of Mr. Chaffanbrass at the Old Bailey had been beyond him ; but he might yet do something at the clubs to set aside the unanimous verdict which had been given against him in the city. Nay, he must do something, unless he was prepared to go to the wall utterly, and at once.

Going to the wall with Undy would mean absolute ruin ; he lived but on the cheekiness of his gait and habits ; he had become member of Parliament, government official, railway director, and club aristocrat, merely by dint of cheek. He had now received a great blow ; he had stood before a crowd, and been annihilated by the better cheek of Mr. Chaffanbrass, and, therefore,

it behoved him at once to do something. When the perfume of the rose grows stale, the flower is at once thrown aside, and carried off as foul refuse. It behoved Undy to see that his perfume was maintained in its purity, or he, too, would be carried off.

The club to which Undy more especially belonged was called the Downing; and of this Alaric was also a member, having been introduced into it by his friend. Here had Alaric spent by far too many of the hours of his married life, and had become well-known and popular. At the time of his conviction the summer was far advanced; it was then August; but Parliament was still sitting, and there were sufficient club men remaining in London to create a daily gathering at the Downing.

On the day following that on which the verdict was found, Undy convened a special committee of the club, in order that he might submit to it a proposition which he thought it indispensable should come from him—so, at least, he declared. The committee did assemble, and when Undy met it, he saw among the faces before him not a few with whom he would willingly have dispensed. However, he had come there to exercise his cheek; no one there should cow him; the wig of Mr. Chaffanbrass was, at any rate, absent.

And so he submitted his proposition. I need not trouble my readers with the neat little speech

in which it was made. Undy was true to himself, and the speech was neat. The proposition was this : that as he had unfortunately been the means of introducing Mr. Alaric Tudor to the club, he considered it to be his duty to suggest that the name of that gentleman should be struck off the books. He then expressed his unmitigated disgust at the crime of which Tudor had been found guilty, uttered some nice little platitudes in the cause of virtue, and expressed a hope "that he might so far refer to a personal matter as to say that his father's family would take care that the lady, whose fortune had been the subject of the trial, should not lose one penny through the dishonesty of her trustee."

Oh, Undy, as high as Haman, if I could ! as high as Haman ! and if not in Lombard Street, then on that open ground where Waterloo Place bisects Pall Mall, so that all the clubs might see thee !

"He would advert," he said, "to one other matter, though, perhaps, his doing so was unnecessary. It was probably known to them all that he had been a witness at the late trial : an iniquitous attempt had been made by the prisoner's counsel to connect his name with the prisoner's guilt. They all too well knew the latitude allowed to lawyers in the criminal courts, to pay much attention to this. Had he" (Undy Scott) "in any way infringed the laws of his country, he was there to answer for it. But he

would go further than this, and declare that if any member of that club doubted his probity in the matter, he was perfectly willing to submit to such member documents which would—&c., &c.”

He finished his speech, and an awful silence reigned around him. No enthusiastic ardour welcomed the well-loved Undy back to his club, and comforted him after the rough usage of the unpolished Chaffanbrass. No ten or twenty voices combined expressed, by their clamorous negation of the last proposed process, that their Undy was above reproach. The eyes around looked into him with no friendly alacrity. Undy, Undy, more cheek still, still more cheek, or you are surely lost.

“If,” said he in a well-assumed indignant tone of injured innocence, “there be any in the club who do suspect me of anything unbecoming a gentleman in this affair, I am willing to retire from it till the matter shall have been investigated; but in such case I demand that the investigation be immediate.”

Oh, Undy, Undy, the supply of cheek is not bad; it is all but unlimited; but yet it suffices thee not. “Can there be positions in this modern West End world of mine,” thought Undy to himself, “in which cheek, unbounded cheek, will not suffice?” Oh, Undy, they are rare; but still there are such, and this, unfortunately for thee, seemeth to be one of them.

And then up got a discreet old baronet, one

who moveth not often in the affairs around him, but who, when he moveth, stirreth many waters, a man of broad acres, and a quiet, well-assured fame, which has grown to him without his seeking it, as barnacles grow to the stout keel when it has been long a-swimming; him, of all men, would Undy have wished to see unconcerned with these matters.

Not in many words, nor eloquent did Sir Thomas speak. "He felt it his duty," he said, "to second the proposal made by Mr. Scott for removing Mr. Tudor from amongst them. He had watched this trial with some care, and he pitied Mr. Tudor from the bottom of his heart. He would not have thought that he could have felt so strong a sympathy for a man convicted of dishonesty. But Mr. Tudor had been convicted, and he must incur the penalties of his fault. One of these penalties must, undoubtedly, be his banishment from this club. He therefore seconded Mr. Scott's proposal."

He then stood silent for a moment, having finished that task; but yet he did not sit down. Why, oh, why does he not sit down? why, oh Undy, does he thus stand, looking at the surface of the table on which he is leaning?

"And now," he said, "he had another proposition to make; and that was that Mr. Undecimus Scott should also be expelled from the club," and having so spoken, in a voice of unusual energy, he then sat down.

And now, Undy, you may as well pack up, and be off without further fuss, to Boulogne, Ostend, or some such idle Elysium, with such money scrapings as you may be able to collect together. No importunity will avail thee anything against the judges and jurymen who are now trying thee. One word from that silent old baronet was worse to thee than all that Mr. Chaffanbrass could say. Come! pack up, and begone.

But he was still a member of Parliament. The Parliament, however, was about to be dissolved, and, of course, it would be useless for him to stand again; he, like Mr. M^cBuffer, had had his spell of it, and he recognised the necessity of vanishing. He at first thought that his life as a legislator might be allowed to come to a natural end, that he might die as it were in his bed, without suffering the acute pain of applying for the Chiltern Hundreds. In this, however, he found himself wrong. The injured honour of all the Tillietudlemites rose against him with one indignant shout; and a rumour, a horrid rumour of a severer fate met his ears. He applied at once for the now coveted sinecure,—and was refused. Her Majesty could not consent to entrust to him the duties of the situation in question——; and in lieu thereof the House expelled him by its unanimous voice.

And now, indeed, it was time for him to pack and begone. He was now liable to the vulgarest persecution from the vulgar herd; his very tailor

and bootmaker would beleaguer him, and coarse unwashed bailiffs take him by the collar. Yes, now indeed, it was time to be off.

And off he was. He paid one fleeting visit to my Lord at Cauldkale Castle, collecting what little he might; another to his honourable wife, adding some slender increase to his little budget, and then he was off. Whither, it is needless to say—to Hamburg perhaps, or to Ems, or the richer tables of Homburg. How he flourished for a while with ambiguous success; how he talked to the young English tourists of what he had done when in Parliament, especially for the rights of married women; how he poked his “Honourable” card in every one’s way, and lugged Lord Gaberlunzie into all conversations; how his face became pimply and his wardrobe seedy; and how at last his wretched life will ooze out from him in some dark corner, like the filthy juice of a decayed fungus which makes hideous the hidden wall on which it bursts, all this is unnecessary more particularly to describe. He is probably still living, and those who desire his acquaintance will find him creeping round some gambling table, and trying to look as though he had in his pocket ample means to secure those hoards of money which men are so listlessly raking about. From our view he has now vanished.

It was a bitter February morning, when two cabs stood packing themselves at No. 5, Paradise

Row, Millbank. It was hardly yet six o'clock, and Paradise Row was dark as Erebus; that solitary gas-light sticking out from the wall of the prison only made darkness visible; the tallow candles which were brought in and out with every article that was stuffed under a seat, or into a corner, would get themselves blown out; and the sleet which was falling fast made the wicks wet, so that they could with difficulty be relighted.

But at last the cabs were packed with luggage, and into one got Gertrude with her husband, her baby, and her mother; and into the other Charley handed Linda, then Alley, and lastly, the youthful maiden, who humbly begged his pardon as she stepped up to the vehicle; and then, having given due directions to the driver, he not without difficulty squeezed himself into the remaining space.

Such journeys as these are always made at a slow pace. Cabmen know very well who must go fast, and who may go slow. Women with children going on board an emigrant vessel at six o'clock on a February morning may be taken very slowly. And very slowly Gertrude and her party were taken. Time had been—nay, it was but the other day—when Alaric's impatient soul would have spurned at such a pace as this. But now he sat tranquil enough. His wife held one of his hands, and the other he pressed against his eyes, as though shading them from the light.

Light there was none, but he had not yet learnt to face Mrs. Woodward even in the darkness.

He had come out of the prison on the day before, and had spent an evening with her. It is needless to say that no one had upbraided him, that no one had hinted that his backslidings had caused all this present misery, had brought them all to that wretched cabin, and would on the morrow separate, perhaps for ever, a mother and a child who loved each other so dearly. No one spoke to him of this ; perhaps no one thought of it ; he, however, did so think of it, that he could not hold his head up before them.

“He was ill,” Gertrude said ; “his long confinement had prostrated him ; but the sea air would revive him in a day or two.” And then she made herself busy, and got the tea for them, and strove, not wholly in vain, “to drive dull care away !”

But slowly as the cabs went in spite of Charley’s vocal execrations, they did get to the docks in time. Who, indeed, was ever too late at the docks ? Who, that ever went there, had not to linger, linger, linger, till every shred of patience was clean worn out ? They got to the docks in time, and got on board that fast sailing, clinker built, never beaten, always healthy ship, the Flash of Lightning, 5500 tons, A 1. Why, we have often wondered, are ships designated as A 1, seeing that all ships are of that class. Where is the excellence, seeing that all share it ? Of

course, the Flash of Lightning was A 1. The author has for years been looking out, and has not yet found a ship advertised as A 2, or even as B 1. What is this catalogue of comparative excellence, of which there is but one visible number?

The world, we think, makes a great mistake on the subject of saying, or acting, farewell. The word or deed should partake of the suddenness of electricity, but we all drawl through it at a snail's pace. We are supposed to tear ourselves from our friends; but tearing is a process which should be done quickly. What is so wretched as lingering over a last kiss, giving the hand for the third time, saying over and over again, "Good bye, John, God bless you, and mind you write!" Who has not seen his dearest friends standing round the window of a railway carriage, while the train would not start, and has not longed to say to them, "Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once!" And of all such farewells, the ship's farewell is the longest and the most dreary. There the train is so very slow in starting, and the starting is of such importance, that a terribly tedious time is devoted to its preparation. One sits on a damp bench, snuffing up the odour of oil and ropes, cudgelling one's brains to think what further word of increased tenderness can be spoken. No tenderer word can be spoken. One returns again and again to the weather, to coats and cloaks, perhaps even to sandwiches and the

sherry flask. All effect is thus destroyed, and a trespass is made even on the domain of feeling.

I remember a line of poetry, learnt in my earliest youth, and which I believe to have emanated from a sentimental Frenchman, a man of genius, with whom my parents were acquainted. It is as follows :—

Are you go?—Is you gone?—And I left!—vera vell!

Now the whole business of a farewell is contained in that line. When the moment comes, let that be said; let that be said and felt, and then let the dear ones part.

Mrs. Woodward and Gertrude—God bless them!—had never studied the subject. They knew no better than to sit in the nasty cabin, surrounded by boxes, stewards, porters, children, and abominations of every kind, holding each other's hands, and pressing damp handkerchiefs to their eyes. The delay, the lingering, upset even Gertrude, and brought her for a moment down to the usual level of leave-taking womanhood. Alaric, the meanwhile, stood leaning over the taffrail with Charley, as mute as the fishes beneath him.

“Write to us the moment you get there,” said Charley. How often had the injunction been given! “And now we had better get off—you'll be better when we are gone, Alaric”—Charley had some sense of the truth about him—“And, Alaric, take my word for it, I'll come and set the Melbourne Weights and Measures to rights before long—I'll come and weigh your gold for you.”

"We had better be going now," said Charley, looking down into the cabin—"they may let loose and be off any moment now."

"Oh, Charley, not yet, not yet," said Linda, clinging to her sister.

"You'll have to go down to the Nore, if you stay; that's all," said Charley.

And then again began the kissing and the crying. Yes, ye dear ones—it is hard to part—it is hard for the mother to see the child of her bosom torn from her for ever; it is cruel that sisters should be severed; it is a harsh sentence for the world to give, that of such a separation as this. These, O ye loving hearts, are the penalties of love! Those that are content to love must always be content to pay them.

"Go, mama, go," said Gertrude; "dearest, best, sweetest mother—my own, own mother; go, Linda, darling Linda. Give my kindest love to Harry—Charley, you and Harry will be good to mama, I know you will. And mama"—and then she whispered to her mother one last prayer in Charley's favour—"She may love him now, indeed she may."

Alaric came to them at the last moment—"Mrs. Woodward," said he, "say that you forgive me."

"I do," said she, embracing him—"God knows that I do;—but, Alaric, remember what a treasure you possess."

And so they parted. May God speed the wanderers!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FATE OF THE NAVVIES.

AND now, having despatched Alaric and his wife and bairns on their long journey, we must go back for a while and tell how Charley had been transformed from an imprudent, idle, young navy into a well-conducted, zealous, young Weights.

When Alaric was convicted, Charley had, as we all know, belonged to the Internal Navigation; when the six months' sentence had expired, Charley was in full blow at the decorous office in Whitehall; and during the same period Norman had resigned and taken on himself the new duties of a country squire. The change which had been made had affected others than Charley. It had been produced by one of those far-stretching, world-moving commotions which now and then occur, sometimes twice or thrice in a generation, and, perhaps, not again for half a century, causing timid men to whisper in corners, and the brave and high-spirited to struggle with the struggling waves, so that when the storm subsides they may be found floating on the surface. A moral earthquake had been endured by a portion of the Civil Service of the country.

The Internal Navigation had——. No, my
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prognostic reader, it had not been reformed ; no new blood had been infused into it ; no attempt had been made to produce a better discipline by the appointment of a younger secretary ; there had been no carting away of decayed wood in the shape of Mr. Snape, or gathering of rank weeds, in the form of Mr. Corkscrew ; nothing of the kind had been attempted. No—the disease had gone too far either for phlebotomy, purging, or cautery.—The Internal Navigation had ceased to exist ! Its demise had been in this wise.—It may be remembered that some time since Mr. Oldeschole had mentioned in the hearing of Mr. Snape that things were going wrong. Sir Gregory Hardlines had expressed an adverse opinion as to the Internal Navigation, and worse, ten times worse than that, there had been an article in the “Times.” Now, we all know that if anything is ever done in any way towards improvement in these days, the public press does it. And we all know, also, of what the public press consists. Mr. Oldeschole knew this well, and even Mr. Snape had a glimmering idea of the truth. When he read that article, Mr. Oldeschole felt that his days were numbered, and Mr. Snape, when he heard of it, began to calculate for the hundredth time to what highest amount of pension he might be adjudged to be entitled by a liberal-minded Treasury minute.

Mr. Oldeschole began to set his house in order, hopelessly ; for any such effort the time was gone

by. It was too late for the office to be so done by, and too late for Mr. Oldeschole to do it. He had no aptitude for new styles and modern improvements; he could not understand Sir Gregory's code of rules, and was dumfounded by the Civil-Service requisitions that were made upon him from time to time. Then came frequent calls for him to attend at Sir Gregory's office. There a new broom had been brought in, in the place of our poor friend Alaric, a broom which seemed determined to sweep all before it with an unmitigable energy. Mr. Oldeschole found that he could not stand at all before this young Hercules, seeing that his special stall was considered to be the foulest in the whole range of the Augean stables. He soon saw that the river was to be turned in on him, and that he was to be officially obliterated in the flood.

The civility of those wonder-doing demigods—those Magi of the Civil Service office—was most oppressive to him. When he got to the board, he was always treated with a deference which he knew was but a prelude to barbaric tortures. They would ask him to sit down in a beautiful new leathern arm-chair, as though he were really some great man, and then examine him as they would a candidate for the Custom House, smiling always, but looking at him as though they were determined to see through him.

They asked him all manner of questions; but there was one question which they put to him,

day after day, for four days, that nearly drove him mad. It was always put by that horrid young lynx-eyed new commissioner, who sat there with his hair brushed high from off his forehead, peering out of his capacious excellently washed shirt collars, a personification of conscious official zeal.

“And now, Mr. Oldeschole, if you have had leisure to consider the question more fully, perhaps you can define to us what is the—hum—hm—the use—hum—h-m—hm—the exact use of the Internal Navigation Office?”

And then Sir Warwick would go on looking through his millstone as though now he really had a hope of seeing something, and Sir Gregory would lean back in his chair, and rubbing his hands slowly over each other, like a great Akinetos as he was, wait leisurely for Mr. Oldeschole's answer, or rather for his no answer.

What a question was this to ask of a man who had spent all his life in the Internal Navigation Office? O reader! should it chance that thou art a clergyman, imagine what it would be to thee, wert thou asked what is the exact use of the Church of England, and that, too, by some stubborn catechist whom thou wert bound to answer; or, if a lady, happy in a husband and family, say, what would be thy feelings if demanded to define the exact use of matrimony? Use! Is it not all in all to thee?

Mr. Oldeschole felt a hearty inward conviction

that his office had been of very great use. In the first place, had he not drawn from it a thousand a year for the last five and twenty years? had it not given maintenance and employment to many worthy men who might perhaps have found it difficult to obtain maintenance elsewhere? had it not always been an office, a public office of note and reputation, with proper work assigned to it? The use of it—the exact use of it? Mr. Oldeschole at last declared, with some indignation in his tone, that he had been there for forty years and knew well that the office was very useful; but that he would not undertake to define its exact use. “Thank you, thank you, Mr. Oldeschole—that will do, I think,” said the very spruce looking new gentleman out of his shirt collars.

In these days there was a kind of prescience at the Internal Navigation that something special was going to be done with them. Mr. Oldeschole said nothing openly; but it may be presumed that he did whisper somewhat to those of the seniors around him in whom he most confided. And, then, his frequent visits to Whitehall were spoken of even by the most thoughtless of the navvies, and the threatenings of the coming storm revealed themselves with more or less distinctness to every mind.

At last the thunder-cloud broke and the bolt fell. Mr. Oldeschole was informed that the Lords of the Treasury had resolved on breaking

up the establishment and providing for the duties in another way. As the word duties passed Sir Gregory's lips, a slight smile was seen to hover round the mouth of the new commissioner. Mr. Oldeschole would, he was informed, receive an official notification to this effect on the following morning; and on the following morning accordingly a despatch arrived of great length, containing the resolution of my Lords, and putting an absolute extinguisher on the life of every navvy.

How Mr. Oldeschole, with tears streaming down his cheeks, communicated the tidings to the elder brethren; and how the elder brethren, with palpitating hearts and quivering voices, repeated the tale to the listening juniors, it beats me now to describe. The boldest spirits were then cowed, the loudest miscreants were then silenced; there were but few gibes, but little jeering at the Internal Navigation on that day; though Charley, who had already other hopes, contrived to keep up his spirit. The men stood about talking in clusters, and old animosities were at an end. The lamb sat down with the wolf, and Mr. Snape and Dick Scatterall became quite confidential.

"I knew it was going to happen," said Mr. Snape to him. "Indeed Mr. Oldeschole has been consulting us about it for some time; but I must own I did not think it would be so sudden; I must own that."

"If you knew it was coming," said Corkscrew, "why didn't you tell a chap?"

"I was not at liberty," said Mr. Snape, looking very wise.

"We shall all have liberty enough now," said Scatterall; "I wonder what they'll do with us; eh, Charley?"

"I believe they will send the worst of us to Spike Island or Dartmoor prison," said Charley; "but Mr. Snape, no doubt, has heard and can tell us."

"Oh, come, Charley! It don't do to chaff now," said a young navvy, who was especially down in the mouth. "I wonder will they do anything for a fellow?"

"I heard my uncle, in Parliament Street, say, that when a chap has got any *infested* interest in a thing, they can't turn him out," said Corkscrew; "and my uncle is a parliamentary agent."

"Can't they, though," said Scatterall. "It seems to me that they mean to, at any rate; there wasn't a word about pensions or anything of that sort, was there, Mr. Snape?"

"Not a word," said Snape. "But those who are entitled to pensions can't be affected injuriously; as far as I can see they must give me my whole salary. I don't think they can do less."

"You're all serene then, Mr. Snape," said Charley; "you're in the right box. Looking at matters in that light, Mr. Snape, I think you

ought to stand something handsome in the shape of lunch. Come, what do you say to chops and stout all round?" Dick will go over and order it in a minute."

"I wish you wouldn't, Charley," said the navvy, who seemed to be most affected, and who, in his present humour, could not endure a joke. As Mr. Snape did not seem to accede to Charley's views, the liberal proposition fell to the ground.

"Care killed a cat," said Scatterall. "I shan't break my heart about it. I never liked the shop—did you, Charley?"

"Well, I must say I think we have been very comfortable here, under Mr. Snape," said Charley. "But if Mr. Snape is to go, why the office certainly would be deuced dull without him."

"Charley!" said the broken-hearted young navvy, in a tone of reproach.

Sorrow, however, did not take away their appetite, and as Mr. Snape did not see fitting occasion for providing a banquet, they clubbed together, and among them managed to get a spread of beefsteaks, and porter. Scatterall, as requested, went across the Strand to order it at the cook-shop, while Corkscrew and Charley prepared the tables. "And, now, mind it's the thing," said Dick, who, with intimate familiarity, had penetrated into the eating-house kitchen; "not dry, you know, or too much done, and lots of fat."

And, then, as the generous viands renewed

their strength, and as the potent stout warmed their blood, happier ideas came to them, and they began to hope that the world was not all over. "Well, I shall try for the Customs," said the unhappy one, after a deep pull at the pewter. "I shall try for the Customs; one does get such stunning feeds for tenpence at that place in Thames Street." Poor youth! his ideas of earning his bread did not in their wildest flight spread beyond the public offices of the Civil Service.

For a few days longer they hung about the old office, doing nothing; how could men so circumstanced do anything?—and waiting for their fate. At last their fate was announced. Mr. Oldeschole retired with his full salary. Secretaries and such like always retire with full pay, as it is necessary that dignity should be supported. Mr. Snape and the other seniors were pensioned, with a careful respect to their years of service; with which arrangement they all of them expressed themselves highly indignant, and loudly threatened to bring the cruelty of their treatment before Parliament, by the aid of sundry members, who were supposed to be on the look out for such work; but, as nothing further was ever heard of them, it may be presumed that the members in question did not regard the case as one on which the government of the day was sufficiently vulnerable to make it worth their while to trouble themselves. Of the younger clerks, two or three, including the unhappy one,

were drafted into other offices; some others received one or more years' pay, and, then, tore themselves away from the fascinations of London life; among those was Mr. R. Scatterall, who, in after years, will doubtless become a lawgiver in Hong Kong; for to that colony has he betaken himself. Some few others, more unfortunate than the rest, among whom poor Screwey was the most conspicuous, were treated with a more absolute rigour, and were sent upon the world portionless. Screwey had been constant in his devotion to pork-chops, and had persisted in spelling blue without the final e. He was, therefore, declared unworthy of any further public confidence whatever. He is now in his uncle's office in Parliament Street; and it is to be hoped that his peculiar talents may there be found useful.

And so the Internal Navigation Office came to an end, and the dull, dingy rooms were vacant. Ruthless men shovelled off as waste paper all the lock entries of which Charley had once been so proud; and the ponderous ledgers, which Mr. Snape had delighted to haul about, were sent away into Cimmerian darkness, and probably to utter destruction. And then the Internal Navigation was no more

Among those who were drafted into other offices was Charley, whom propitious fate took to the Weights and Measures. But it must not

be imagined that chance took him there. The Weights and Measures was an Elysium, the door of which was never casually open.

Charley at this time was a much altered man; not that he had become a good clerk at his old office; such a change one may say was impossible; there were no good clerks at the Internal Navigation, and Charley had so long been among navvies the most knavish or navviest, that any such transformation would have met with no credence; but out of his office he had become a much altered man. As Katie had said, it was as though some one had come to him from the dead. He could not go back to his old haunts, he could not return like a dog to his vomit, as long as he had that purse so near his heart, as long as that voice sounded in his ear, while the memory of that kiss lingered in his heart.

He now told everything to Gertrude, all his debts, all his love, and all his despair. There is no relief for sorrow like the sympathy of a friend, if one can only find it. But then the sympathy must be real; mock sympathy always tells the truth against itself, always fails to deceive. He told everything to Gertrude, and by her counsel he told much to Norman. He could not speak to him, true friend as he was, of Katie and her love. There was that about the subject which made it too sacred for man's ears, too full of tenderness to be spoken of without feminine tears. It was only in the little parlour at Paradise Row,

when the evening had grown dark, and Gertrude was sitting with her baby in her arms, that the boisterous young navvy could bring himself to speak of his love.

During these months Katie's health had greatly improved, and as she herself had gained in strength, she had gradually begun to think that it was yet possible for her to live. Little was now said by her about Charley, and not much was said of him in her hearing; but still she did learn how he had changed his office, and with his office his mode of life; she did hear of his literary efforts, and of his kindness to Gertrude, and it would seem as though it were ordained that his moral life and her physical life were to gain strength together.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. NOGO'S LAST QUESTION.

BUT at this time Charley was not idle. The fate of "Crinoline and Macassar" has not yet been told; nor has that of the two rival chieftains, the "Baron of Ballyporeen and Sir Anthony Allan a Dale." These heartrending tales appeared in due course, bit by bit, in the pages of the "Daily Delight." On every morning of the week, Sundays excepted, a page and a half of Charley's narrative was given to the expectant public; and though I am not prepared to say that the public received the offering with any violent acclamations of applause, that his name became suddenly that of a great unknown, that literary cliques talked about him to the exclusion of other topics, or that he rose famous one morning as Byron did after the publication of the Corsair, nevertheless something was said in his praise. The "Daily Delight," on the whole, was rather belittled by its grander brethren of the press, but a word or two was said here and there to exempt Charley's fictions from the general pooh-poohing with which the remainder of the publication was treated.

Success, such as this even, is dear to the mind

of a young author, and Charley began to feel that he had done something. The editor was proportionably civil to him, and he was encouraged to commence a third historiette.

“We have polished off poison and petticoats pretty well,” said the editor. “What do you say now to something political?”

Charley had no objection in life.

“This divorce bill, now—we could have half a dozen married couples all separating, getting rid of their ribs and buckling again, helter-skelter, every man to somebody else’s wife; and the parish parson refusing to do the work; just to show the immorality of the thing.”

Charley said he’d think about it.

“Or the Danubian Principalities and the French alliance—could you manage now to lay your scene in Constantinople?”

Charley doubted whether he could.

“Or perhaps India is the thing. The Cawnpore massacre would work up into any lengths you pleased. You could get a file of the ‘Times,’ you know, for your facts.”

But while the editor was giving these various valuable hints as to the author’s future subjects, the author himself, with base mind, was thinking how much he should be paid for his past labours. At last he ventured, in the mildest manner, to allude to the subject.

“Payment!” said the editor.

Charley said that he had understood that there

was to be some fixed scale of pay ; so much per sheet, or something of that sort.

“Undoubtedly there will,” said the editor ; “and those who will have the courage and perseverance to work through with us, till the publication has obtained that wide popularity which it is sure to achieve, will doubtless be paid, be paid as no writers for any periodical in this metropolis have ever yet been paid. But at present, Mr. Tudor, you really must be aware that it is quite out of the question.”

Charley had not the courage and perseverance to work through with the “Daily Delight” till it had achieved its promised popularity, and consequently left its ranks like a dastard. He consulted both Gertrude and Norman on the subject, and on their advice set himself to work on his own bottom. “You may perhaps manage to fly alone,” said Gertrude ; “but you will find it very difficult to fly if you tie the whole weight of the “Daily Delight” under your wings.” So Charley prepared himself for solitary soaring.

While he was thus working, the time arrived at which Norman was to leave his office, and it occurred to him that it might be possible that he should bequeath his vacancy to Charley. He went himself to Sir Gregory, and explained, not only his own circumstances, and his former friendship with Alaric Tudor, but also the relationship between Alaric and Charley. He then learnt, in the strictest confidence of course, that

the doom of the Internal Navigation had just been settled, and that it would be necessary to place in other offices those young men who could in any way be regarded as worth their salt, and, after considerable manœuvring, had it so arranged that the ne'er-do-well young navvie should recommence his official life under better auspices.

Nor did Charley come in at the bottom of his office; but was allowed by some inscrutable order of the great men who arranged those things to take a position in the Weights and Measures equal in seniority and standing to that which he had held at the Navigation, and much higher, of course in pay. There is an old saying, which the unenlightened credit, and which declares that that which is sauce for the goose is sauce also for the gander. Nothing put into a proverb since the days of Solomon was ever more untrue. That which is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander, and especially is not so in official life. Poor Screwey was the goose, and certainly got the sauce best suited to him when he was turned adrift out of the Civil Service. Charley was the gander, and fond as I am of him for his many excellent qualities, I am fain to own that justice might fairly have demanded that he should be cooked after the same receipt. But it suited certain potent personages to make a swan of him, and therefore, though it had long been an assured fact through the whole service that no man was

ever known to enter the Weights and Measures without the strictest examination, though the character of aspirants for that high office were always subjected to a rigid scrutiny, though knowledge, accomplishments, industry, morality, outward decency, inward zeal, and all the cardinal virtues were absolutely requisite, still Charley was admitted, without any examination or scrutiny whatever, during the commotion consequent upon the earthquake above described.

It is a part of the British constitution that black is white or white black, when official purposes require that they should be so; and indeed it is a necessary part of the constitution, for without it no government would be for us practicable. It would hardly be possible that our public work should be carried on, in all its details, without any fault, with perfect freedom from blundering. One would say that it is anything but possible. Faults will occur; but as no faults may be forgiven, no faults must be admitted. A minister who would once own that either he or any of his had done wrong would soon go to the wall. Faults there must be, but they must be made to look like fresh virtues. And yet our business has to get itself done as it were out in the open air; or at least under a glass case, where the works go on, visible to the public eye, like the wheels of a new fashioned clock. All mankind are looking on; and certain men, a noisy overbearing class, have the privilege of

questioning every turn of every wheel. How, under such circumstances, would any government be possible, if some clever Mr. Whip Vigil were not always ready to prove that black is white, and white black?

Charley went to the Weights some time during the recess. In the process of the next session Mr. Nogo gave notice that he meant to ask the Government a question as to a gross act of injustice which had been perpetrated—so at least the matter had been represented to him—on the suppression of the Internal Navigation Office.

Mr. Nogo did not at first find it very easy to get a fitting opportunity for asking his question. He had to give notice, and inquiries had to be made, and the responsible people were away, and various customary accidents happened, so that it was late in June before the question was put. Mr. Nogo, however, persevered ruthlessly, and after six months' labour, did deliver himself of an indignant and, as his friends declared to him, a very telling speech.

It was reported at the time by the opposition newspapers, and need not therefore be given here. But the upshot was this: two men bearing equal character—Mr. Nogo would not say whether the characters of the gentlemen were good or bad—he would only say equal characters—sat in the same room at this now defunct office; one was Mr. Corkscrew and the other Mr. Tudor. One had no friends in the Civil

Service, but the other was more fortunate. Mr. Corkscrew had been sent upon the world, a ruined, blighted man, without any compensation, without any regard for his interests, without any consideration for his past services or future prospects. They would be told that the Government had no further need of his labours, and that they could not dare to saddle the country with the pension for so young a man. But what had been done in the case of the other gentleman? Why, he had been put into a valuable situation, in the best government office in London, had been placed over the heads of a dozen others, who had been there before him, &c., &c., &c. And then Mr. Nogo ended with so vehement an attack on Sir Gregory, and the Government as connected with him, that the dogs began to whet their teeth and prepare for a tug at the great badger.

But circumstances were mischancey with Mr. Nogo; and all he said redounded only to the credit of our friend Charley. His black undoubtedly was black; the merits of Charley and Mr. Corkscrew, as public servants, had been about equal; but Mr. Whip Vigil turned the black into white in three minutes.

As he got upon his legs, smiling after the manner of his great exemplar, he held in his hand a small note and a newspaper. "A comparison," he said, "had been instituted between the merits of two gentlemen formerly in the employment of the Crown, one of whom had

been selected for further employment, and the other rejected. The honourable member for Mile End had, he regretted to say, instituted this comparison. They all knew what was the proverbial character of a comparison. It was, however, ready made to his hands, and there was nothing left for him, Mr. Whip Vigil, but to go on with it. This, however, he would do in as light a manner as possible. It had been thought that the one gentleman would not suit the public service, and that the other would do so. It was for him merely to defend this opinion. He now held in his hand a letter written by the *protegé* of the honourable member for Limehouse; he would not read it," (cries of Read, read!) "no he would not read it, but the honourable member might if he would—and could. He himself was prepared to say that a gentleman who chose to express himself in such a style in his private notes—this note, however, was not private in the usual sense—could hardly be expected to command a proper supply of wholesome English such as the service of the Crown demanded!" Then Mr. Vigil handed across to Mr. Nogo poor Screwey's unfortunate letter about the pork chops. "As to the other gentleman, whose name was now respectably known in the lighter walks of literature, he would, if permitted, read the opinion expressed as to his style of language by a literary publication of the day; and then the House would see whether or no the produce

of the Civil Service field had not been properly winnowed; whether the wheat had not been garnered, and the chaff neglected." And then the right honourable gentleman read some half dozen lines, highly eulogistic of Charley's first solitary flight.

Poor Mr. Nogo remained in silence, feeling that his black had become white to all intents and purposes; and the big badger sat by and grinned, not deigning to notice the dogs around him. Thus it may be seen that that which is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander.

Early in the spring Norman was married; and then, as had been before arranged, Charley once more went to Surbiton Cottage. The marriage was a very quiet affair. The feeling of disgrace which had fallen upon them all since the days of Alaric's trial had by no means worn itself away. There were none of them yet—no, not one of the cottage circle, from Uncle Bat down to the parlour-maid, who felt that they had a right to hold up their faces before the light of day, as they had formerly done. There was a cloud over their house, visible perhaps with more or less distinctness to all eyes, but which to themselves appeared black as night. That evil which Alaric had done to them was not to be undone in a few moons. We are all of us responsible for our friends, fathers-in-law for their sons-in-law, brothers for their sisters, husbands for their

wives, parents for their children, and children even for their parents. We cannot wipe off from us, as with a wet cloth, the stains left by the fault of those who are near to us. The ink spot will cling. Oh ! Alaric, Alaric, that thou, thou who knewest all this, that thou shouldest have done this thing ! They had forgiven his offence against them, but they could not forget their own involuntary participation in his disgrace. It was not for them now to shine forth to the world with fine gala doings, and gay gaudy colours, as they had done when Gertrude had been married.

But still there was happiness, quiet, staid happiness at the cottage. Mrs. Woodward could not but be happy to see Linda married to Harry Norman, her own favourite, him, whom she had selected in her heart for her son-in-law from out of all the world. And now too she was beginning to be conscious that Harry and Linda were better suited for each other than he and Gertrude would have been. What would have been Linda's fate, how unendurable, had she been Alaric's wife, when Alaric fell ? How would she have borne such a fall ? what could she have done, poor lamb, towards mending the broken thread or binding the bruised limbs ? what balm could she have poured into such wounds as those, which fate had inflicted on Gertrude and her household. But at Norman's Grove, with a steady old

housekeeper at her back, and her husband always by her to give her courage, Linda would find the very place for which she was suited.

And then Mrs. Woodward had other source of joy, of liveliest joy, in Katie's mending looks. She was at the wedding, though hardly with her mother's approval. As she got better her old spirit returned to her, and it became difficult to refuse her anything. It was in vain that her mother talked of the cold church, and easterly winds, and the necessary lightness of a bridesmaid's attire. Katie argued that the church was only two hundred yards off, that she never suffered from the cold, and that though dressed in light colours, as became a bridesmaid, she would, if allowed to go, wear over her white frock any amount of cloaks which her mother chose to impose on her. Of course she went, and we will not say how beautiful she looked, when she clung to Linda in the vestry-room, and all her mother's wrappings fell in disorder from her shoulders.

So Linda was married and carried off to Norman's Grove, and Katie remained with her mother and Uncle Bat.

"Mama, we will never part—will we, mama?" said she, as they comforted each other that evening after the Normans were gone, and when Charley also had returned to London.

"When you go, Katie, I think you must take me with you," said her mother, smiling through

her tears. "But what will poor Uncle Bat do? I fear you can't take him also."

"I will never go from you, mama."

Her mother knew what she meant. Charley had been there, Charley to whom she had declared her love when lying, as she thought, on her bed of death—Charley had been there again, and had stood close to her, and touched her hand, and looked——Oh, how much handsomer he was than Harry, how much brighter than Alaric!—he had touched her hand, and spoken to her one word of joy at her recovered health. But that had been all. There was a sort of compact, Katie knew, that there should be no other Tudor marriage. Charley was not now the scamp he had been, but still——It was understood that her love was not to win its object.

"I will never go from you, mama."

But Mrs. Woodward's heart was not hard as the nether millstone. She drew her daughter to her, and as she pressed her to her bosom she whispered into her ears that she now hoped they might all be happy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

OUR tale and toils have now drawn nigh to an end; our loves and our sorrows are over; and we are soon to part company with the three clerks and their three wives. Their three wives? Why, yes. It need hardly be told in so many words to an habitual novel reader that Charley did get his bride at last.

Nevertheless, Katie kept her promise to Mrs. Woodward. What promise did she ever make and not keep? She kept her promise, and did not go from her mother. She married Mr. Charles Tudor of the Weights and Measures, that distinguished master of modern fiction, as the "Literary Censor" very civilly called him the other day; and Mr. Charles Tudor became master of Surbiton Cottage.

Reader! take one last leap with me, and presume that two years have flown from us since the end of the last chapter; or rather somewhat more than two years, for we would have it high midsummer when we take our last farewell of Surbiton Cottage.

But sundry changes had taken place at the cottage, and of such a nature that, were it not

for the old name's sake, we should now find ourselves bound to call the place Surbiton Villa, or Surbiton Hall, or Surbiton House. It certainly had no longer any right to the title of a cottage, for Charley, in anticipation of what Lucina might do for him, had added on sundry rooms, a children's room on the ground floor, and a nursery above, and a couple of additional bed-rooms on the other side, so that the house was now a comfortable abode for an increasing family.

At the time of which we are now speaking Lucina had not as yet done much, for, in truth, Charley had been married but little over twelve months; but there appeared every reason to believe that the goddess would be propitious. There was already one little rocking shrine, up in that cosy temple opening out of Katie's bedroom—we beg her pardon, we should have said Mrs. Charles Tudor's bed-room—one precious tabernacle in which was laid a little man-deity, a young Charley, to whom was daily paid a multitude of very sincere devotions.

How precious are all the belongings of a first baby; how dear are the cradle, the lace-caps, the first coral, all the little duds which are made with such punctilious care and anxious efforts of nicest needlework to encircle that small lump of pink humanity! What care is taken that all shall be in order! See that basket lined with crimson silk, prepared to hold his various garments, while the mother, jealous of her nurse, insists on tying

every string with her own fingers. And then how soon the change comes ; how different it is when there are ten of them, and the tenth is allowed to inherit the well-worn wealth which the ninth, a year ago, had received from the eighth. There is no crimson silk basket then, I trow.

“Jane, Jane, where are my boots?” “Mary, I’ve lost my trousers!” Such sounds are heard, shouted through the house from powerful lungs.

“Why, Charley,” says the mother, as her eldest hope rushes in to breakfast with dishevelled hair and dirty hands, “you’ve got no handkerchief on your neck—what have you done with your handkerchief?”

“No, mama ; it came off in the hay-loft, and I can’t find it.”

“Papa,” says the lady wife, turning to her lord, who is reading his newspaper over his coffee—“papa, you really must speak to Charley ; he will not mind me. He was dressed quite nicely an hour ago, and do see what a figure he has made himself.”

“Charley,” says papa, not quite relishing this disturbance in the midst of a very interesting badger-baiting—“Charley, my boy, if you don’t mind your P’s and Q’s, you and I shall fall out, mind that ;” and he again goes on with his sport ; and mama goes on with her tea-pot, looking not exactly like patience on a monument.

Such are the joys which await you, Mr. Charles

Tudor; but not to such have you as yet arrived. As yet there is but the one little pink deity in the rocking shrine above; but one, at least, of your own. At the moment of which we are now speaking there were visitors at Surbiton Cottage, and the new nursery was brought into full use. Mr. and Mrs. Norman, of Norman's Grove, were there with their two children and two maids, and grandmama Woodward had her hands quite full in the family nursery line.

It was a beautiful summer evening, and the two young mothers were sitting with Mrs. Woodward and Uncle Bat in the drawing-room, waiting for their lords' return from London. As usual, when they stayed late, the two men were to dine at their club and come down to tea. The nurse-maids were walking on the lawn before the window with their charges, and the three ladies were busily employed with some fairly-written manuscript pages, which they were cutting carefully into shape, and arranging in particular form.

"Now, mama," said Katie, "if you laugh once while you are reading it, you'll spoil it all."

"I'll do the best I can, my dear, but I'm sure I shall break down; you have made it so very abusive," said Mrs. Woodward.

"Mama, I think I'll take out that about official priggism—hadn't I better, Linda?"

"Indeed, I think you had; I'm sure, mama

would break down there," said Linda. "Mama, I'am sure you would never get over the official priggism."

"I don't think I should, my dear," said Mrs. Woodward.

"What is it you are all concocting?" said Captain Cuttwater; "some infernal mischief, I know, craving your pardons."

"If you tell, Uncle Bat, I'll never forgive you," said Katie.

"Oh, you may trust me, I never spoil sport if I can't make any; but the fun ought to be very good, for you've been a mortal long time about it."

And then the two younger ladies again went on clipping and arranging their papers, while Mrs. Woodward renewed her protest that she would do her best as to reading their production. While they were thus employed the postman's knock was heard, and a letter was brought in from the far away Australian exiles. The period at which these monthly missives arrived were moments of intense anxiety, and the letter was seized upon with eager avidity. It was from Gertrude to her mother, as all these letters were; but in such a production they had a joint property, and it was hardly possible to say who first mastered its contents.

It will only be necessary here to give some extracts from the letter, which was by no means a short one. So much must be done in order

that our readers may know something of the fate of those, who perhaps may be called the hero and heroine of the tale. The author does not so call them; he professes to do his work without any such appendages to his story—heroism there may be, and he hopes there is—more or less of it there should be in a true picture of most characters; but heroes and heroines, as so called, are not commonly met with in our daily walks of life.

Before Gertrude's letter had been disposed of, Norman and Charley came in, and it was therefore discussed in full conclave. Alaric's path in the land of his banishment had not been over roses. The upward struggle of men, who have fallen from a high place once gained, that second mounting of the ladder of life, seldom is an easy path. He, and with him Gertrude and his children, had been called on to pay the full price of his backsliding. His history had gone with him to the Antipodes, and though the knowledge of what he had done was not there so absolute a clog upon his efforts, so overpowering a burden as it would have been in London, still it was a burden and a heavy one.

It had been well for Gertrude that she had prepared herself to give up all her luxuries by her six months' residence in that Millbank Paradise; of luxuries, for some time she had little enough in the "good and happy land," to which she had taught herself and her children to look

forward. That land of promise had not flowed with milk and honey when first she put her foot upon its soil; its produce for her had been gall and bitter herbs for many a weary month after she first landed. But her heart had never sunk within her. She had never forgotten that he, if he were to work well, should have at least one cheerful companion by his side. She had been true to him, then as ever. And yet it is so hard to be true to high principles in little things. The heroism of the Roman, who, for his country's sake, leapt his horse into a bottomless gulf, was as nothing to that of a woman who can keep her temper through poverty, and be cheerful in adversity.

Through poverty, scorn, and bad repute, under the privations of a hard life, separated from so many that she had loved, and from everything that she had liked, Gertrude had still been true to her ideas of her marriage-vow; true, also, to her pure and single love. She had entwined herself with him in sunny weather; and when the storm came, she did her best to shelter the battered stem to which she had trusted herself.

By degrees things mended with them; and in this letter, which is now passing from eager hand to hand in Katie's drawing-room, Gertrude spoke with better hope of their future prospects.

"Thank God, we are once more all well," she said; "and Alaric's spirits are higher than they were. He has, indeed, had much to try them.

They think, I believe, in England, that any kind of work here is sure to command a high price ; of this I am quite sure, that in no employment in England are people so tasked as they are here. Alaric was four months in these men's counting-house, and I am sure another four months would have seen him in his grave. Though I knew not then what other provision might be made for us, I implored him, almost on my knees, to give up that. He was expected to be there for ten, sometimes twelve hours a day ; and they thought he should always be kept going like a steam-engine. You know Alaric never was afraid of work ; but that would have killed him. And what was it for ? What did they give him for that—for all his talent, all his experience, all his skill ? And he did give them all. His salary was two pounds ten a week ! And then when he told them of all he was doing for them, they had the baseness to remind him of ——. Dearest mother, is not the world hard ? It was that that made me insist that he should leave them.”

Alaric's present path was by no means over roses. This certainly was a change from those days in which he had sat, one of a mighty trio, at the Civil Service Examination Board, striking terror into candidates by a scratch of his pen, and making happy the desponding heart by his approving nod. His ambition now was not to sit among the magnates of Great Britain, and make his voice thunder through the columns of

the "Times;" it ranged somewhat lower at this period, and was confined for the present to a strong desire to see his wife and bairns sufficiently fed, and not left absolutely without clothing. He inquired little as to the feeling of the electors of Strathbogy.

And had he utterly forgotten the stirring motto of his early days? Did he never mutter "Excelsior" to himself, as, with weary steps, he dragged himself home from that hated counting-house? Ah! he had fatally mistaken the meaning of the word which he had so often used. There had been the error of his life. Excelsior! When he took such a watchword for his use, he should surely have taught himself the meaning of it.

He had now learnt that lesson in a school somewhat of the sternest; but, as time wore kindly over him, he did teach himself to accept the lesson with humility. His spirit had been well nigh broken as he was carried from that court-house in the Old Bailey to his prison on the river side; and a broken spirit, like a broken goblet, can never again become whole. But Nature was a kind mother to him, and did not permit him to be wholly crushed. She still left within the plant the germ of life, which enabled it again to spring up and vivify, though sorely bruised by the heels of those who had ridden over it. He still repeated to himself the old watchword, though now in humbler tone and

more bated breath; and it may be presumed that he had now a clearer meaning of its import.

“But his present place,” continued Gertrude, “is much—very much more suited to him. He is corresponding clerk in the first bank here, and though his pay is nearly double what it was at the other place, his hours of work are not so oppressive. He goes at nine and gets away at five—that is, except on the arrival or despatch of the English mails.” Here was a place of bliss for a man who had been a commissioner, attending at the office at such hours as best suited himself, and having clerks at his beck to do all that he listed. And yet, as Gertrude said, this was a place of bliss to him. It was a heaven as compared with that other hell.

“Alley is such a noble boy,” said Gertrude, becoming almost joyous as she spoke of her own immediate cares. “He is most like Katie, I think, of us all; and yet he is very like his papa. He goes to a day-school now, with his books slung over his back in a bag. You never saw such a proud little fellow as he is, and so manly. Charley is just like you—oh! so like. It makes me so happy that he is. He did not talk so early as Alley, but, nevertheless, he is more forward than the other children I see here. The little monkeys! they are neither of them the least like me. But one can always see oneself, and it don’t matter if one does not.”

“If ever there was a brick, Gertrude is one,” said Norman.

“A brick!” said Charley—“why you might cut her to pieces, and build another Kennington palace out of the slices. I believe she is a brick.”

“I wonder whether I shall ever see her again,” said Mrs. Woodward, not with dry eyes.

“Oh yes, mama,” said Katie. “She shall come home to us some day, and we will endeavour to reward her for it all.”

Dear Katie—who will not love you for such endeavour? But, indeed, the reward for heroism cometh not here.

There was much more in the letter, but enough has been given for our purpose. It will be seen that hope yet remained both for Alaric and his wife; and hope not without a reasonable base. Bad as he had been, it had not been with him as with Undy Scott. The devil had not contrived to put his whole claw upon him. He had not divested himself of human affections and celestial hopes. He had not reduced himself to the present level of a beast, with the disadvantages of a soul and of an eternity, as the other man had done. He had not put himself beyond the pale of true brotherhood with his fellow-men. We would have hanged Undy, had the laws permitted us; but now we will say farewell to the other, hoping that he may yet achieve exaltation of another kind.

And to thee, Gertrude—how shall we say fare-

well to thee, excluded as thou art from that dear home, where those who love thee so well are now so happy? Their only care remaining is now thy absence. Adversity has tried thee in its crucible, and thou art found to be of virgin gold, unalloyed; hadst thou still been lapped in prosperity, the true ring of thy sterling metal would never have been heard. Farewell to thee, and may those young budding flowerets of thine break forth into golden fruit to gladden thy heart in coming days!

The reading of Gertrude's letter, and the consequent discussion, somewhat put off the execution of the little scheme which had been devised for that evening's amusement; but, nevertheless, it was still broad daylight when Mrs. Woodward consigned the precious document to her desk; the drawing-room windows were still open, and the bairns were still being fondled in the room. It was the first week in July, when the night almost loses her dominion, and when those hours which she generally claims as her own, become the pleasantest of the day.

"Oh, Charley," said Katie, at last. "We have great news for you, too. Here is another review on the 'World's last Wonder.'"

Now the "World's last Wonder" was Charley's third novel; but he was still sensitive enough on the subject of reviews to look with much anxiety for what was said of him. These notices were habitually sent down to him at

Hampton, and his custom was to make his wife or her mother read them, while he sat by in lordly ease in his arm-chair, receiving homage when homage came to him, and criticizing the critics when they were uncivil.

“Have you?” said Charley; “what is it? why did you not show it me before?”

“Why, we were talking of dear Gertrude,” said Katie; “and it is not so pleasant, but that it will keep. What paper do you think it is?”

“What paper? how on earth can I tell—show it me.”

“No; but do guess, Charley; and then mama will read it—pray guess now.”

“Oh, bother, I can’t guess. The ‘Literary Censor,’ I suppose—I know they have turned against me.”

“No, it’s not that;” said Linda, “guess again.”

“The ‘Guardian Angel,’ said Charley.

“No—that angel has not taken you under his wings as yet,” said Katie.

“I know it’s not the ‘Times,’ said Charley, “for I have seen that.”

“Oh, no,” said Katie, seriously; “if it was anything of that sort, we would not keep you in suspense.”

“Well, I’ll be shot if I guess any more—there are such thousands of them.”

“But there is only one ‘Daily Delight,’ said Mrs. Woodward.

“Nonsense!” said Charley. “You don’t mean

to tell me that my dear old friend and foster-father has fallen foul of me—my old teacher and master, if not spiritual pastor; well—well—well. The ingratitude of the age! I gave him my two beautiful stories, the first-fruits of my vine, all for love; to think that he should now lay his treacherous axe to the root of the young tree—well, give it here.”

“No—mama will read it—we want Harry to hear it.”

“Oh, yes—let Mrs. Woodward read it,” said Harry. “I trust it is severe. I know no man who wants a dragging over the coals more peremptorily than you do.”

“Thankee, sir. Well, grandmama, go on; but if there be anything very bad, give me a little notice, for I am nervous.”

And then Mrs. Woodward began to read, Linda sitting with Katie’s baby in her arms, and Katie performing a similar office for her sister.

‘The “World’s Last Wonder,” by Charles Tudor, Esq.’

“He begins with a lie,” said Charley, “for I never called myself Esquire.”

“Oh, that was a mistake,” said Katie, forgetting herself.

“Men of that kind shouldn’t make such mistakes,” said Charley; “when one fellow attempts to cut up another fellow, he ought to take special care that he does it fairly.”

‘By the author of “Bathos.”’

“I didn’t put that in,” said Charley; “that was the publisher. I only put Charles Tudor.”

“Don’t be so touchy, Charley, and let me go on,” said Mrs. Woodward.

“Well, fire away—it’s good fun to you I dare say; as the fly said to the spider.”

“Well, Charley—at any rate we are not the spiders,” said Linda. Katie said nothing, but she could not help feeling that she must look rather spiderish.

‘Mr. Tudor has acquired some little reputation as a humorist, but as is so often the case with those who make us laugh, his very success will prove his ruin.’

“Then upon my word the ‘Daily Delight’ is safe,” said Charley. “It will never be ruined in that way.”

‘There is an elaborate jocosity about him, a determined eternity of most industrious fun, which gives us the idea of a boy who is being rewarded for having duly learnt by rote his daily lesson out of Joe Miller.’

“Now, I’ll bet ten to one he has never read the book at all—well, never mind—go on.”

‘The “World’s Last Wonder” is the description of a woman who kept a secret under certain temptations to reveal it, which, as Mr. Tudor supposes, might have moved any daughter of Eve to break her faith.’

“I haven’t supposed anything of the kind,” said Charley.

‘This secret, which we shall not disclose, as we would not wish to be thought less trustworthy than Mr. Tudor’s wonderful woman—’

“We shall find that he does disclose it, of course; that is the way with all of them.”
—‘Is presumed to permeate the whole three volumes.’

“It is told at full length in the middle of the second,” said Charley.

‘And the effect upon the reader of course is, that he has ceased to interest himself about it, long before it is disclosed to him!’

‘The lady in question is engaged to be married to a gentleman, a circumstance which in the pages of a novel is not calculated to attract much special attention. She is engaged to be married, but the gentleman who has the honour of being her intended sposo——’

“Intended sposo!” said Charley, expressing by his up-turned lip a withering amount of scorn—“how well I know the fellow’s low attempts at wit! That’s the editor himself—that’s my literary papa. I know him as well as though I had seen him at it.”

Katie and Mrs. Woodward exchanged furtive glances, but neither of them moved a muscle of her face.

‘But the gentleman who has the honour of

being her intended sposo,' continued Mrs. Woodward.

"What the devil's a sposo?" said Uncle Bat, who was sitting in an arm-chair with a handkerchief over his head.

"Why, you're not a sposo, Uncle Bat," said Linda; "but Harry is, and so is Charley."

"Oh, I see," said the captain; "it's a bird with his wings clipped."

'But the gentleman who has the honour of being her intended sposo——,' again read Mrs. Woodward.

"Now I'm sure I'm speaking by the card," said Charley, "when I say that there is not another man in London who could have written that line, and who would have used so detestable a word. I think I remember his using it in one of his lectures to me; indeed I'm sure I do. Sposo! I should like to tweak his nose oh!"

"Are you going to let me go on?" said Mrs. Woodward—"her intended sposo"—Charley gave a kick with his foot and satisfied himself with that—"is determined to have nothing to say to her in the matrimonial line till she has revealed to him this secret which he thinks concerns his own honour."

"There I knew he'd tell it."

"He has not told it yet," said Norman.

'The lady however is obdurate, wonderfully so, of course, seeing that she is the world's last won-

der, and so the match is broken off. But the secret is of such a nature that the lady's invincible objection to revealing it is bound up with the fact of her being a promised bride.'

"I wonder he didn't say *sposa*," said Charley.

"I never thought of that," said Katie.

Mrs. Woodward and Linda looked at her, but Charley did not, and her blunder passed by unnoticed.

'Now that she is free from her matrimonial bonds, she is free also to tell the secret; and indeed the welfare both of the gentleman and of the lady imperiously demand that it should be told. Should he marry her, he is destined to learn it after his marriage; should he not marry her, he may hear it at any time. She sends for him and tells him, not the first of these facts, by doing which all difficulty would have at once been put an end to——'

"It is quite clear he has never read the story, quite clear," said Charley.

'She tells him only the last, viz. that as they are now strangers he may know the secret; but that when once known it will raise a barrier between them that no years, no penance, no sorrow on his part, no tenderness on hers can ever break down. She then asks him—will he hear the secret?'

"She does not ask any such thing," said

Charley, "the letter that contains it has been already sent to him. She merely gives him an opportunity of returning it unopened."

'The gentleman, who is not without a grain of obstinacy in his own composition and many grains of curiosity, declares it to be impossible that he can go to the altar in ignorance of facts which he is bound to know, and the lady who seems to be of an affectionate disposition falls in tenderness at his feet. She is indeed in a very winning mood, and quite inclined to use every means allowable to a lady for retaining her lover, every means that is short of that specially feminine one of telling her secret.'

'We will give an extract from this love scene, partly for the sake of its grotesque absurdity—'

Charley kicked out another foot, as though he thought that the editor of the "Daily Delight" might perhaps be within reach.

'—And partly because it gives a fair example of the manner in which Mr. Tudor endeavours to be droll even in the midst of his most tender passages.

' "Leonora was at this time seated——"'

"Oh, skip the extract," said Charley; "I suppose there are three or four pages of it."

"It goes down to where Leonora says that his fate and her own are in his hands."

"Yes, about three columns," said Charley; "that's an easy way of making an article—eh, Harry?"

"*Aliter non fit, amice, liber*," said the classical Norman.

"Well, skip the extract, grandmama."

'Now, did any one ever before read such a mixture of the bombastic and the burlesque? We are called upon to cry over every joke, and, for the life of us, we cannot hold our sides when the catastrophes occur. It is a salad in which the pungency of the vinegar has been wholly subdued by the oil, and the fatness of the oil destroyed by the tartness of the vinegar.'

"His old simile," said Charley; "he was always talking about literary salads."

'The gentleman, of course, gives way at the last minute,' continued Mrs. Woodward. 'The scene in which he sits with the unopened letter lying on his table before him has some merit; but this probably arises from the fact that the letter is dumb, and the gentleman equally so.'

"D—nation!" said Charley, whose patience could not stand such impudence as this.

'The gentleman, who, as we should have before said, is the eldest son of a man of large reputed fortune—'

"There—I knew he'd tell it."

"Oh, but he hasn't told it," said Norman.

"Doesn't the word 'reputed' tell it?"

'—The eldest son of a man of large reputed fortune does at last marry the heroine; and then he discovers——. But what he discovers, those who feel any interest in the matter may learn from

the book itself; we must profess that we felt none.'

'We will not say that there is nothing in the work indicative of talent. The hero's valet, Jacob Brush, and the heroine's lady's-maid, Jacintha Pintail, are both humorous and good in their way. Why it should be so, we do not pretend to say; but it certainly does appear to us that Mr. Tudor is more at home in the servants' hall, than in the lady's boudoir.'

"Abominable scoundrel," said Charley.

'But what we must chiefly notice,' continued the article, 'in the furtherance of those views by which we profess that we are governed—'

"Now, I know, we are to have something very grandiloquent and very false," said Charley.

'——is this; that no moral purpose can be served by the volumes before us. The hero acts wrongly throughout, but nevertheless he is rewarded at last. There is no Nemesis——'

"No what?" said Charley, jumping up from his chair and looking over the table.

"No Nemesis," said Mrs. Woodward, speaking with only half-sustained voice, and covering with her arms the document which she had been reading.

Charley looked sharply at his wife, then at Linda, and then at Mrs. Woodward. Not one of them could keep her face. He made a snatch at the patched-up manuscript, and as he did so,

Katie almost threw out of her arms the baby she was holding.

"Take him, Harry, take him," said she, handing over the child to his father. And then gliding quick as thought through the furniture of the drawing-room, she darted out upon the lawn, to save herself from the coming storm.

Charley was quickly after her; but as he made his exit, one chair fell to the right of him, and another to the left. Mrs. Woodward followed them, and so did Harry and Linda, each with a baby.

And then Captain Cuttwater waking from his placid nap, rubbed his eyes in wondering amazement.

"What the devil is all the row about?" said he. But there was nobody to answer him.

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